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Robert Herrick; a
biographical &
critical study

HERRICK

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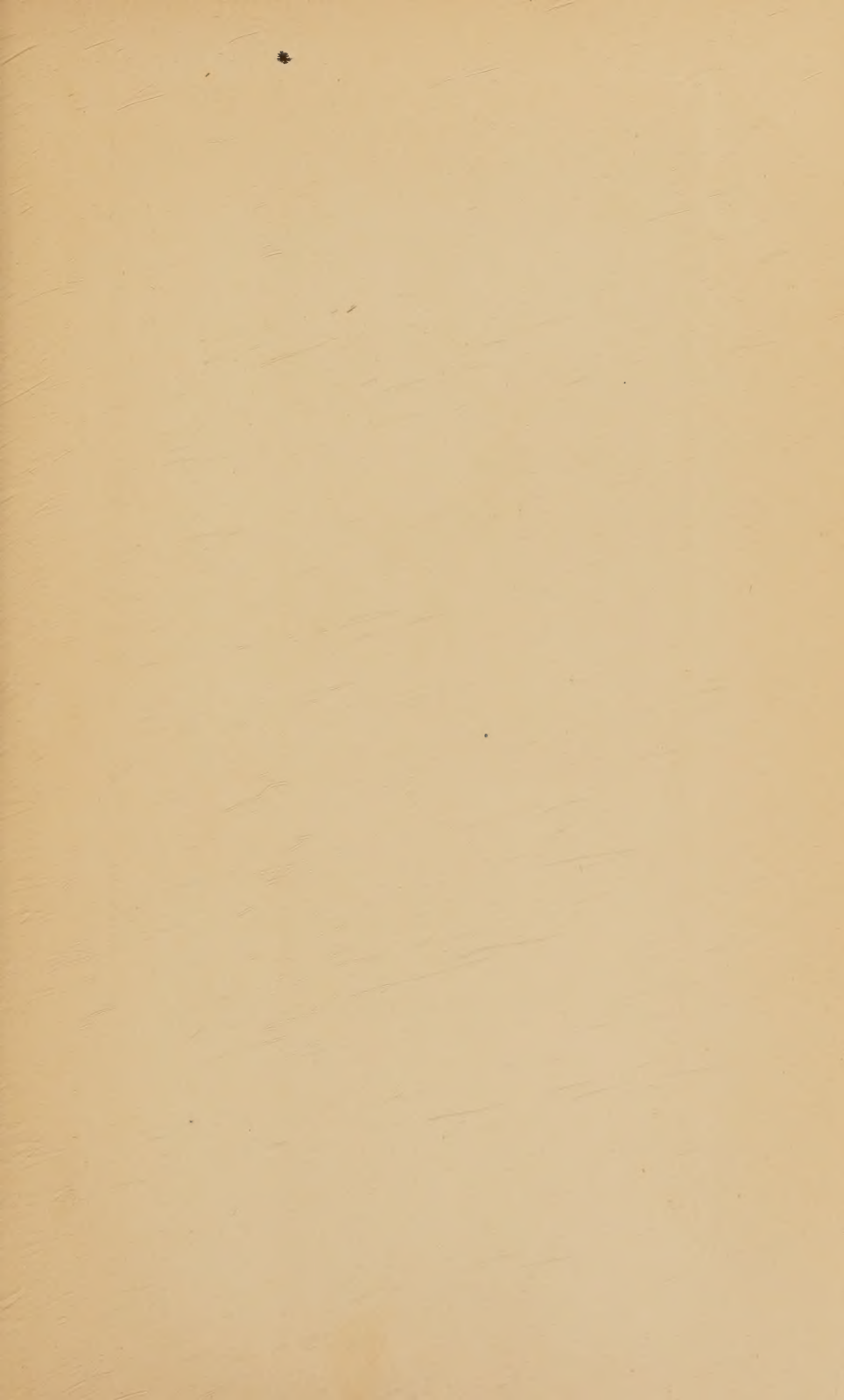
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ROBERT HERRICK
A BIOGRAPHICAL
& CRITICAL STUDY






Robert Herrick.

*From Marshall's Frontispiece to the
first edition of "Hesperides"*

ROBERT HERRICK

A BIOGRAPHICAL & CRITICAL STUDY
BY F. W. MOORMAN, B.A., PH.D. 
ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
LITERATURE IN THE UNIVERSITY
OF LEEDS, WITH NINE FULL-PAGE
ILLUSTRATIONS INCLUDING A
FRONTISPIECE IN PHOTOGRAVURE

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TO
MY WIFE

PREFACE

THE charm of Herrick's personality, quite apart from his high standing as a lyric poet, calls for a biography.

Thirty-four years have passed since there appeared, almost simultaneously, Mr Edmund Gosse's brilliant essay on the poet in the *Cornhill Magazine*, and Dr Grosart's edition of the *Hesperides*, with its scholarly Memorial-Introduction. The many editions of Herrick's poems which have since been published furnish abundant evidence of the fact that the poet's faith in the immortality of his verses was no idle dream. Some of his editors—in particular, Mr W. C. Hazlitt and Mr A. W. Pollard—have thrown fresh light upon his career and his scholarship, and I gladly avail myself of this opportunity of acknowledging the help which I have received from their labours. An examination of State Papers in the Record Office, and of the letters and account-books of the poet's uncle, Sir William Herrick, at Beaumanor, has not been altogether fruitless, but the story which is told

Robert Herrick

in the following pages owes most of all to the record—often, it is true, tangled and inconclusive—which is set forth by Herrick himself in his verses. He is the most ingenuous and self-revealing of poets; and though the order in which the poems are placed in the first edition of *Hesperides* is anything but chronological, it is not difficult to trace him in his progress through life, and to see the working of his mind.

I have followed Dr Grosart in detaching the story of the poet's life from the criticism of his verses. The place which the *Hesperides* poems occupy in the history of the English lyric is a peculiarly interesting one, and this must be my excuse for the length of the first chapter in Part II., in which I have attempted to review briefly the development of the lyric of the English Renaissance down to the time of Herrick.

In conclusion, I desire to offer sincere thanks to all who have helped me in my work. Among these I may mention, in particular, Mrs Perry Herrick, who kindly allowed me to examine the Herrick papers at Beaumanor, the Rev. C. J. Perry-Keene, vicar of Dean Prior, and Sir Walter S. Prideaux, the clerk of the Goldsmiths' Company, who generously undertook to examine, on my behalf, some of the company's records at Gold-

Preface

smiths' Hall, and who has allowed me to reproduce, from his "Memorials of the Goldsmiths' Company," the engraving of Goldsmiths' Row, Cheapside. My thanks are also due to the Rev. Canon Egerton Leigh, who allowed me to copy a hitherto unpublished letter of the poet which is in his possession. Finally, I acknowledge with special gratitude my debt to Mr A. H. Bullen, and to my friend and colleague, Professor Charles Vaughan, both of whom rendered me conspicuous service by reading the following pages in manuscript: the book has gained much by their searching criticism and wise suggestions.

F. W. MOORMAN.

THE UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS,
February 1910.

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PART I
THE LIFE

CHAPTER I

EARLY YEARS

SIR WALTER SCOTT, writing of Swift's mother in his memoir of the Dean of St Patrick's, declares that her "ancient genealogy was her principal dowry." The lady in question was Abigail Ericke, descended from one of the branches of the Leicestershire family of Erickes, Heyricks or Herricks, to which also belonged the author of the *Hesperides*. The family tradition of the Herricks is that they owe their origin to a certain Eric the Forester, who raised an army to oppose William the Conqueror, and who, being defeated, was employed as a commander in the Conqueror's army. In his old age this Eric is said to have retired to his home in Leicestershire—the county with which the Herricks have ever since been closely associated.¹

This tradition, unlike many such family traditions, does not seem to err through ambition. The probability is, indeed, that the Herricks are

¹ See Deane Swift, *Essay on the Life of Dr Jonathan Swift*, Appendix, p. 37, and Nichols' *History of the County of Leicester*, vol. ii. p. 579.

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of royal descent. The name Herrick, the spelling of which with the initial aspirate was not common until late in the sixteenth century, and, as we see from the name of Swift's mother, was not even then adopted by all the branches of the family, is undoubtedly Scandinavian in origin. Under the forms Eirikr and Eirekr it appears as the name of at least one Swedish and one Danish king, and it is found in English history as early as the middle of the tenth century. The first English Eric of whom historic legend tells was the famous Viking, Eric Blood-axe—Eirekr Blodax—of whom Norse saga and English chronicle have much to relate. He was the son of the Norwegian king, Harold Fairhair, and was born in Norway early in the tenth century. Driven from his home by his kinsfolk, he settled among the Anglian and Danish peoples of Northumbria, who, in the year 952, at a time of revolution, made him their king. For two years he reigned at York, and then was driven from his throne, and afterwards slain by Anlaf, an under-king of Eadred of Wessex. This Eric Blood-axe, by virtue of his deeds of daring and his adventurous career, appealed to the imagination of the gleemen, and in his honour was written the famous *Eiriks-Mal* or *Dirge of Eric*, the earliest of all Scandinavian Valhalla-songs.¹ There was, too, another Eric — Eric Hakonsson — who

¹ See Appendix II.

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occupies a distinguished place in Dano-English history, and is celebrated in song no less than Eric Blood-axe. This was the Eric who married the daughter of King Sveinn, and joined with that king in the Danish conquest of Wessex. He lived into the reign of Cnut, by whom he was made Earl of Northumberland, and as "Dux Ericus" his name is found in old English charters down to the year 1023.¹

Under the stern rule of William the Conqueror the Erics, as the family tradition already referred to relates, found it prudent to retire to their Leicestershire estates, within the old Danelaw, where we find them leading a peaceful, law-abiding existence in the centuries which follow. There is still extant a letter sent by Henry III. to a certain Ivo de Herric, and more than a century later we hear of another Ivo de Herric, or Eyrick, who was living at Great Stretton in Leicestershire. The first of these two Ivos may be the Eyrick of Stretton, *temp.* Henry III., to whom the Herrick pedigrees refer, and from whom was descended Sir William Eyrick, the progenitor of the Houghton branch of the family, to which the author of the *Hesperides* belonged. Another member of the family was Robert Eyrick, who was the first Master of Trinity Hall, Cambridge, and died Bishop of Lichfield in 1385.

¹ See *Corpus Boreale*, ii. 98.

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At Houghton, a village six miles from Leicester, the descendants of Sir William Eyrick increased in number till the ancestral home was unable to contain them all; and one of the family, Thomas Ericke, gentleman, accordingly migrated to the neighbouring town of Leicester, about the end of the fifteenth century. His name appears on the Corporation Books of Leicester in 1511, and he was the first of the line of Herricks to be intimately connected with the civic life of the county-town. This Thomas Ericke was the great-grandfather of the poet. His son John, who married Mary Bond, the daughter of a Warwickshire gentleman, remained at Leicester, of which town he was twice the Mayor, and brought up a family of five sons and seven daughters. And now once again the growth of the family called for a fresh migration. Just as the Leicestershire village was found too small to provide sustenance for the numerous members of the Herrick family of an earlier generation, so now the county-town could not support the twelve children of John and Mary Eyrick. The eldest son, Robert, remained at home, built up a considerable fortune as an ironmonger, was three times elected Mayor, and represented the borough in Parliament. The second son, Nicholas, the poet's father, decided to seek his fortune elsewhere. In, or before, the year 1556 he was apprenticed to a goldsmith in Cheapside, London, and on the expiration of his

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apprenticeship, started business on his own account in the same locality.

Thanks to the preservation at Beaumanor Park, Leicestershire, of a number of papers bearing on the Herrick family, we are able to gather a good deal of information concerning the poet's father. Among these papers are certain letters written to him by his father in Leicester, and extending from April 16, 1556, to August 28, 1584. They represent the Cheapside goldsmith as an excellent son, doing all in his power to provide for his brothers and sisters. Some time between 1556 and 1575 his eldest sister, Ursula, had followed him to London, and had found a husband there. Another sister, Mary, had also joined the London household, and in 1575 was keeping house for her brother. Some years later she married Sir John Bennett, and in 1603 rode in state to the Guildhall as Lady Mayoress. In providing for his sisters, Nicholas Herrick was not forgetful of his brothers. About the year 1574 his youngest brother, William, of whom we shall hear more presently, was sent to London to enter Nicholas's house and business. After 1575 there are several letters to prentice William from his father and mother, while from the last of John Eyrick's letters, dated August 28, 1584, we learn that yet another brother, John, had come up to London and received help from Nicholas.

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In 1582 Nicholas Herrick¹ married Julian or Juliana Stone, daughter of William Stone of London, gentleman. In the Allegations for Marriage Licences, issued by the Bishop of London,² there is the following entry: "December 8, 1582, Nicholas Herycke, Goldsmith, and Juliana Stone, Spinster, of City of London; at St Leonard's, Bromley, Middlesex." Of the poet's mother not very much is known, and her son refers to her only once in the *Hesperides*. Like her husband, she came of a good family. The Stones sprang originally from Worcestershire, but the branch of the family to which the poet's mother belonged had been settled for some generations in London. Her father is spoken of in the Visitations of London as William Stone of London, gentleman, and in another place as William Stone of Seyno (Segenhoe), in the county of Bedford. Certain complimentary poems among the *Hesperides* show that their author stood on very friendly terms with various members of his mother's family. Anne Stone, a sister of Juliana, was the wife of Sir Stephen Soame, a member of a still more prominent London family of the time; and another sister, who gave shelter to Juliana Herrick and her children after Nicholas

¹ Contrary to his father's custom, he usually spells his name with the initial aspirate—perhaps in deference to cockney pronunciation.

² Edited by G. J. Armytage (Harleian Society Publications, vol. xxv.).

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Herrick's death, married Henry Campion, a member of another family of some distinction in the city of London and the county of Kent.

The members of the Herrick family in London were doubtless present at Nicholas's wedding, but age and infirmities prevented old John and Mary Eyrick from making the journey from Leicester in the inclement month of December. John Eyrick's letter to his son on this occasion has been preserved, and deserves inclusion here :—

“Sonne Nicholas Eyrick ; your mother and I have us commended unto your bedfellowe and you ; for I trust now that ye be a married man ; for I hard by your brother Stanford that youe weir appointed to marry on Monday the tenth of December ; and if youe be maryed, we pray God to sende youe bothe muche joye and comfort together, and to all hir friends and yours. I pray you have us commended to your wive's parents and frends not as yet knowne or acquaynted with us ; but I trust hereafter we shall, if God send us lyffe togethar. We wysshe ourselffs that we had bene with youe at your weddyng ; but the tyme of the year is so, that it hade bene paineful for your moder and me to have ridden suche a jornay : the dais being so short, and way so foule, cheffeley being so olde and onweldy as we be both ; and specyally your mother hath such paine in one of her kne-bones that she cannot goe many tymes about the

Robert Herrick

hows without a staff in her hand; and I myselffe have had for the spase of allmost of this halffe yeare mych paine of my right sholder that I cannot get on my gowne without help. Age bringeth infyrmytes with it; God hath so ordayned. . . . I trust we shall see your wiffe and you at Leicester this next summer to make mery with us, and lykewise your brother Haws and his wiffe, your brother Holden and his wiffe, with some other of your frends. Your mother and I doe gyve harty thanks for your good tokyns youe sente to us of late, and for all your other good tokyns youe have sent us; and we be sorry that you have benne at such charge, and we to send you but seldom anny thing that good is, and sometyme marr'd in the carredge.

“Your mother and I have sent your wiffe and youe, to make mery withall in Christmas, two sholdir of brawne and two ronds, and one rond for your brother and sister Haws, and one rond for your brother Holden and his wiffe, and one rond to Thomas Chapman agenst the great condyth in Chepe. Every body's pesse hath their names written on them. . . . My wiffe hath sent to your sistar Mary three yards of cloth to make hir a smock. Thus I bid you hartely farwell. At Leicester, on Sondag morning, being the xv day of December, 1582. By your loving father to his power, John Eyrick.”¹

¹ From Nichols' *History of the County of Leicester*, vol. ii. pp. 622-3.

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Other letters from Leicester follow, and inform us that William and Mary Herrick continued to live with their brother after his marriage, and that Nicholas prospered in business, but suffered much from ague.

Nicholas Herrick's church was St Vedast's in Foster Lane, the register of which escaped the great fire, and contains the entries of his children's births. From it we learn that three sons, William, Thomas, and Nicholas, and two daughters, Martha and Anne, were born between 1585 and 1590, and then comes the following entry: "Roberte Herricke, sonne to Nicholas Herricke, was baptized the xxiiith day of Auguste, 1591."

It is not without significance that, in respect of the time at which he was born, Herrick stands midway between the early school of English lyrists—represented by Peele (born 1558?), Lodge (1558?), Greene (1560?), Shakespeare (1564), Campion (1567), Jonson (1573), Donne (1573), Barnfield (1574), and John Fletcher (1579)—and the later school of Caroline lyrists, of which Carew (1598?), Crashaw (1613), Lovelace (1618), and Vaughan (1622) are the most distinguished members. Nearest to him of English poets stand Quarles (1592), George Herbert (1593), and Shirley (1596).

The place of the poet's birth can be determined fairly exactly. One of the letters of Mary Eyrick

Robert Herrick

of Leicester, the poet's grandmother, to her son William bears the following endorsement: "To her lovyng sonne William Heryck in London, dwelling with Nicholas Heryck in Cheip, give theis." Another letter from the same source indicates the birth-place still more exactly: it is directed to "M^r William Heireyck, at the Rowes in the Goulsmeth Rowe in Cheap." From this we gather that the poet was born in Goldsmiths' Row, Cheapside, in the heart of the city, and in close proximity to that house in Bread Street where, seventeen years later, Milton first saw the light.

The first year of the poet's life was spent in the business-house in Cheapside, but scarcely had he entered on his second year when a dark tragedy fell upon the family. Early in the November of 1592, Nicholas Herrick, the prosperous goldsmith, fell from an upper window in his Cheapside house and sustained injuries which proved fatal. On November 7 he made his will, and three days later he was buried in the church of St Vedast's.

For the widow and the orphaned children this was sad enough, but the circumstances of his death made it sadder. Suspicions were aroused that the fall was intentional, and in accordance with the laws of the time, the case was investigated by the Queen's High Almoner, Dr Richard Fletcher, Bishop of Bristol, the father of the dramatist and uncle of Giles and Phineas Fletcher.

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The Draconian severity of the law was such that, if a person was found guilty of suicide, his property reverted to the Crown. The statement of the case, as made out by the High Almoner, reads as follows :—

“ And where one Nich’as Herrick late citezeine and Goldsmythe of London about the Nyneth daye of this instant moneth of November (as is supposed) did throwe himselfe forthe of a garret window in London aforesaide whereby he did kill and destroye himself, By reason whereof all such goodes chattells and debtes as were the said Nich’as Herrickes at the tyme of his deathe or ought any waies to apperteyne or belonge vnto him do nowe belonge apperteyne and are forfeited vnto o^r said sou’aigne Lady the quene by force of her P^rogatyve royall and nowe are in the only order and disposicon of me the saide bushopp Almoner in augmentacon of her moste gracious almes by force and vertue of the said l^res patentees to me made and graunted as aforesaide (if the saide Nich’as Herrick be or shalbe founde felon of himselfe).”¹

It would be hard to exaggerate the terrible plight in which the widow, Julian Herrick, was placed during these dark days of November, 1592. The mother of five children, and of a sixth not yet born, she had lost her husband

¹ *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, ed. J. J. Howard, Second Series, vol. i. p. 41.

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under peculiarly distressing circumstances, and was now threatened with the forfeiture of all his hard-won possessions. Fortunately she was surrounded by influential relations, both on her own and her husband's side, and we may well believe that it was owing largely to their instrumentality that, before the month was out, the Bishop of Bristol gave up all claim to the dead man's goods.

Nicholas Herrick could have been little more than a name to his gifted son, but the poet does honour to his memory in the poem entitled *To the Reverend Shade of his Religious Father*,¹ written about 1627; in it he craves his father's forgiveness for neglecting for so long to pay a visit to his tomb. His excuse is that he did not know where his bones had been interred—

Forgive, forgive me, since I did not know
Whether thy bones had here their rest or no.

In his will Nicholas Herrick estimated his property at the value of £3000, and bequeathed one-third of this sum to his "loveinge wife Julian," and the other two-thirds in equal shares to his six children. His two sons, Thomas and Nicholas, and his brothers, Robert and William, were appointed executors. Papers preserved at Beaumanor show that the value of Nicholas Herrick's estate was

¹ *Hesperides*, ed. Pollard, No. 82.

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not £3000 but £5068, and also that, in addition to this, two London merchants, Edmund Pyggott and Richard Coxe, were in possession of a considerable sum of money—probably the proceeds of some charitable fund—placed at the disposal of the widow and her children. We read of disbursements of £600 in 1597 and £200 in 1598, together with smaller sums on subsequent occasions.

Soon after her husband's death Julian Herrick left London with her children, and took up her abode at Hampton, in Middlesex, in the house of her sister, Anne Campion. The boy Robert, therefore, though city-born, was country-bred, and we may think of his childhood as having been spent in the delightful village which lies on the north side of the great river which he grew to love so well, and close to the palace which Wolsey had built, and which, after that minister's fall and death, had become a favourite residence of the Tudor monarchs. The Hampton scenery is of that quiet sylvan and pastoral character which accords well with the prevailing mood of the *Hesperides*. The royal parks, the river with the willow trees growing on its banks and on the numerous eyots which at this point lie in its channel, the broad stretches of rich meadow-land, and in the distance the chalk-hills of Surrey, must have formed a landscape of peculiar attractiveness to one of Herrick's temperament. And if

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the scenery was somewhat wanting in features which appealed to the boy's imagination, these were supplied by the royal palace close at hand. The villagers of Hampton must have had many thrilling stories to tell of bygone doings at Hampton Court. Many still alive could remember the building and princely equipment of the palace by the great Lord Cardinal, and could tell of the haughty state he kept there. Others could relate stories of how Henry VIII. had paid court to the hapless Anne Boleyn in its stately gardens, or chill the blood in the boy's veins by tales of the shrieking ghost of Queen Catherine Howard that passed by night through the "Haunted Gallery." Nor was it only with stories of the past that the boy's imagination could be fed. Queen Elizabeth kept Christmas there in 1592 and 1593, and in the September of 1599 she was there again, riding in state to the palace from her Surrey home at Nonsuch, and returning after a sojourn of three or four days. The boy of eight may have caught sight of the old queen as she rode over Kingston Bridge, and perhaps saw something of the characteristic incident recorded by Lord Semple of Beltreis, the Scottish ambassador, on this occasion: "At her Majesty's returning from Hampton Court, the day being passing foul, she would (as was her custom) go on horseback, although she is scarce able to sit upright, and my

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Lord Hunsdon said, 'It was not meet for one of her Majesty's years to ride in such a storm.' She answered in great anger, '*My* years! Maids, to your horses quickly'; and so rode all the way, not vouchsafing any gracious countenance to him for two days."¹

With the accession of James I., Hampton Court became the scene of splendid pageants, the lustre of which must to some degree have extended to the adjoining village. The King kept his first Christmas there amid rounds of festivities such as had never before been witnessed. Amongst others, the King's Company of Comedians, with Shakespeare in their number, was there, and in the course of the Christmas festival performed no less than six plays before the monarch and his court. Samuel Daniel was also present, engaged in the preparation of his masque, *The Vision of the Twelve Goddesses*, which was performed in the Great Hall of the palace on the night of January 8, 1604, and in which the Queen and some of the most distinguished nobles in the land took part. And scarcely were the gates of Hampton Court closed upon noble masquers and the King's players, when they opened to dignitaries of the Church and Puritan divines, summoned thither by the King to deliberate on the form of Protestant religion which was to be observed in England,

¹ E. Law's *History of Hampton Court Palace in Tudor Times*, p. 337.

Robert Herrick ?

and to hear the British Solomon utter his famous dictum, "No bishop, no king."

Of the doings within the Great Hall of Hampton Court the boy Robert could have seen nothing; but of the outside bustle, the comings and goings of ambassadors and bishops, the hunting of the stag in the Hampton parks, and all the activity which prevails when royalty holds high festival, he doubtless saw and heard a good deal. Such an impression, too, does he give us in his poems of his love of gay colours and gorgeous ceremonial, that we can well believe that he took the keenest interest in all this royal pomp. And if the glories of the King's court were familiar to him in these early years, so, we may imagine, were the civic festivities of the city, fifteen miles away. Having so many relations, both on his father's and his mother's side, prominently associated with the life of the capital, he could not have grown up altogether ignorant of London affairs. He could hardly have missed a visit with his mother to the city and Cheapside in 1598, when his aunt, Anne, Lady Soame, rode with her husband in state to the Guildhall as Lady Mayoress; nor again in 1603, when the same honour fell to the lot of another of his aunts, the Mary Herrick that had spent many years under his father's roof, and was now the wife of Sir John Bennett.

But court festivities and Lord Mayor's shows,

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were, after all, only the dazzling delights of hours of exceptional splendour. For the common round of life the boy had only the simple pleasures and interests afforded by a small riverside village and the comradeship of his three brothers and two sisters. The Thames, with its richly caparisoned barges passing up and down the stream, must have proved an endless source of interest, and rambles along its banks, or through the parks of Hampton, may well have occupied many an idle hour. It could not have been a dull life, and there is no likelihood that the Herrick children, orphans as they were, felt the pinch of poverty. The means at their disposal were necessarily more slender than those of their many city cousins, but their inheritance from their father, and the money placed at the disposal of their mother and their uncle William for their support by the London merchants, Edmund Pyggott and Richard Coxe, was sufficient for the ordinary needs of life.

No information has as yet come to light as to the school at which Robert Herrick received his education. Walford and Grosart assumed that he was educated at the famous Westminster School, the headmasters of which during his school-years were William Camden the antiquary (1593-1599), and Richard Ireland (1599-1610). But the foundations on which the assumption rests are not capable of bearing much weight ;

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they are to be found in the poem, *His Tears to Thamasis* (1028)¹ :—

I send, I send here my supremest kiss
To thee, my silver-footed Thamasis.
No more shall I reiterate thy Strand,
Whereon so many stately structures stand :
Nor in the summer's sweeter evenings go
To bathe in thee, as thousand others do ;
No more shall I along thy crystal glide,
In barge, with boughs and rushes beautified,
With smooth-soft virgins, for our chaste disport,
To Richmond, Kingston, and to Hampton Court.
Never again shall I with finny oar
Put from, or draw unto the faithful shore,
And landing here, or safely landing there,
Make way to my beloved Westminster. . . .

x To assume, with Walford and Grosart, that Herrick's reference to his "beloved Westminster" is necessarily to the school there, and that he went thither by boat from Hampton *via* Kingston and Richmond, is manifestly unsafe ; or, if the assumption be made, we may well share Mr Alfred Pollard's wonder as to what William Camden had to say to the "smooth-soft virgins, for our chaste disport" that kept him company. The truth is that this poem recalls many of the poet's memories of the river Thames—memories which extended from infancy to manhood. The fact that his uncle William had a house at Westminster when the poet was a boy may well

¹ The numbers here and elsewhere refer to Mr Pollard's numbering of Herrick's poems in the Muses' Library Herrick.

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account for early visits there, and it is probable that the neighbourhood was familiar enough to him after he left Cambridge. His connection with Westminster is also assured by the fact that he spent some time in lodgings there in 1640, and retired thither in 1647, when ejected from his Dean Prior vicarage. In the absence, therefore, of fuller evidence, we have no right to assume that he was educated at the school which Jonson, Dryden, Locke, Prior, Cowper, and other men of letters, have rendered famous. Two of his cousins, sons of William Herrick, were educated at the Merchant Taylors' School, but the register of its *alumni* makes no mention of the poet. He may, of course, have received his instruction at one of the great London schools, but it is also possible that he was educated nearer home. Hampton Grammar School dates from 1557, while a little farther away, and across the river, was the larger grammar school of the royal borough of Kingston. Wherever educated, Herrick undoubtedly received during his school years sound instruction in the Latin language and literature. As we shall see presently, one of the most Horatian of his poems, that entitled *A Country Life: To his Brother, Mr Thomas Herrick* (106), was almost certainly written before he went to Cambridge, and the frequent quotations from Ovid, Seneca, Horace, and other Roman authors which we meet with in his poems

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point rather to his school-reading than to the severely logical and theological training which formed the main element in his university course of study.

While Robert was still at school, his elder brothers, their school-days over, were being settled in business in London. The eldest, Thomas, senior to Robert by three years, was placed, doubtless by his guardian uncle, William, with a certain Mr Massam, a London merchant, and the second son, Nicholas, junior to Thomas by a year, was also apprenticed to a London merchant, and later in life seems to have been engaged in trade with the Levant.

With the close of the summer of 1607 Robert's school-days were also over. He was now entering upon his seventeenth year, and the question of his future career was engaging the thoughts of himself, his mother, and his guardian-uncle, William. It is probable that it was the boy's wish to proceed forthwith to one of the universities, but for the present it was not to be. On September 25, 1607, the future poet was apprenticed to his uncle William, now Sir William Herrick, goldsmith, of the city of London. The indenture of apprenticeship is preserved at Beaumanor, and will be found in the appendix to this volume. From it we learn that the term of apprenticeship was to be ten years. The business-house which he entered was one

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of the most substantial in the City of London. His uncle William had prospered greatly since the time when he had been summoned to London by his brother Nicholas to enter the goldsmith's shop in Cheapside. After his brother's death he had removed to the neighbouring Wood Street, and here he amassed a large fortune as goldsmith and banker. In 1595 he purchased from the agents of the Earl of Essex the seat of Beaumanor in Leicestershire; in 1601 he was elected member of parliament for Leicester, and in 1605 the honour of knighthood was conferred upon him.

Sir Walter Scott has given us in his *Fortunes of Nigel* a delightful picture of the household of Master George Heriot, "jingling Geordie," who shared with Sir William Herrick the honour of being jeweller to his Majesty; by means of it we are able to realise something of the life which Robert Herrick was now leading beneath his uncle's roof in Cheapside. The dignity of Sir William's station would perhaps excuse the apprentice the duty of standing before the shop-door and accosting passers-by with the familiar cry, "What d'ye lack, Sir? What d'ye lack, Madam? Rings, bracelets, carcanets, what d'ye lack?" His time would rather be spent within the house, practising the delicate craft of the jeweller and lapidary which had brought the honour of knighthood to his uncle

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William. At sunset his labours for the day were over, for a strict injunction of the wardens of the Goldsmiths' Company forbade buying and selling by candle-light; he was accordingly free to wander forth into the streets and visit his brothers, Thomas and Nicholas, or join with other apprentices in some light-hearted mirth.

The "honest and high-spirited prentices of London," as Thomas Heywood calls them, formed at this time an important section of the body politic, as playwrights, actors, watermen, and the Dogberrys of the city-wards knew to their cost. Their cudgellings in the streets, their tourneys on the river, and their outspoken comments on the plays which, as two-penny groundlings, they watched from the pits of Bankside theatres, were a matter of common reproach among the grave livers of London society. But to what extent Herrick shared in these riotous joys is unknown. His poems are mainly concerned with the doings of later years, and no letters from this period have been preserved. Haunting of taverns was expressly forbidden by the terms of his indenture, but we are probably right in supposing that visits to the theatres were reckoned among the golden hours of these prentice days. Did he, we wonder, see the performance of that stupendous play by Thomas Heywood, *The Four Prentices of*

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London,¹ which was written with the express purpose of glorifying the London apprentices? The play enacted the thrilling adventures of four representatives of that class, who leave their shops in the city to join Robert of Normandy in the First Crusade. Their ship being wrecked, the four apprentices are washed ashore on the coasts of France, Italy, Ireland, and the earldom of Boulogne respectively, where they perform wondrous deeds, and are at last re-united at Jerusalem in time to defeat the Sultan of Babylon and the Sophy of Persia! If he was present at this performance—and what apprentice could have missed such a compliment?—he may also have seen Beaumont and Fletcher's travesty of the play in *The Knight of the Burning Pestle*, and laughed at the heroic adventurings of Ralph, the London grocer's apprentice.

If Herrick had possessed a genuine interest in a commercial career, it is doubtful whether any trade could have suited his temper better than that of a goldsmith and jeweller—unless, indeed, it were that of a perfumer! Many of his verses show just that delicate polish, and that dainty enamelling of thoughts with the gay colours of poetic fancy, which, if applied to the jeweller's craft, might have won him knighthood and a fortune. His poems, too, are full of references to the wares which he handled and

¹ Published in 1615, but written and acted some years earlier.

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polished in his first youth. He sends his Julia a carcanet or necklace of jet to "enthrall" the ivory of her neck, and she bestows upon him in return a bracelet of beads filled with sweet-scented pomander-balls. The lips of the same mistress are rocks of rubies, her teeth quarries of pearls; elsewhere we read of "jimmal rings" and true-love-knots, of bracelets of pearl and amber beads. Surely, too, the young apprentice must have found pleasure in engraving posies for the rings which gay courtiers were presenting to their ladies. Some of his epigrams read like posies, and may even have been written for this purpose in his prentice years. Professor Arber has reprinted in his *English Garner* several of these collections of Elizabethan posies, but none of them contains a more delicately fashioned thought than this from the *Hesperides* (29):—

Love is a circle that doth restless move
In the same sweet eternity of love.

Whatever were the attractions of the goldsmith's craft, and however great the prospects of mercantile greatness, they were insufficient to keep the future poet behind the counter for the whole term of his apprenticeship. In 1613, six years after entering his uncle's business, he broke loose from his Wood Street moorings, and exchanged the apprentice's jerkin for the student's

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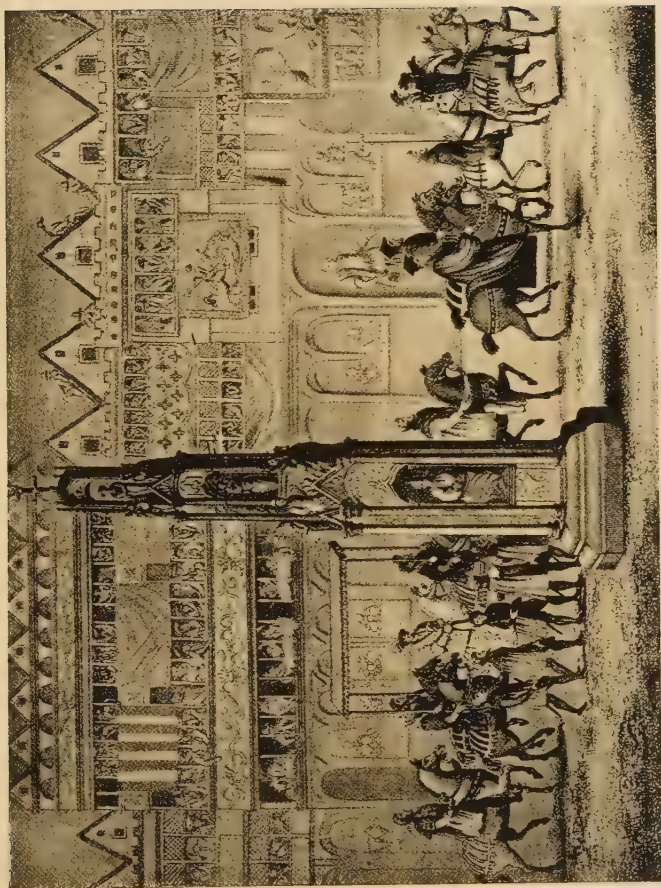
cap and gown. It is hard to believe that his uncle, Sir William, looked with favourable eye upon this change of front. Robert's elder brother, Thomas, who had been apprenticed by Sir William to Mr Massam, a London merchant, in 1605, had, in similar fashion, turned his back upon the counting-house in 1610, and started farming in the country. This change of calling, as we shall presently see, had not proved a success; and now, three years later, Sir William saw another nephew, for whose future welfare he had made careful provision, defeating his well-laid plans. But the future poet, having now reached the age of twenty-two, was to some extent his own master, and his uncle, however reluctantly, was forced to acquiesce in the change of career.

CHAPTER II

AT CAMBRIDGE

BEFORE following Herrick to the University of Cambridge, which he entered some time in 1613, it is well to consider whether any of the *Hesperides* poems belong to the years of his apprenticeship. The chronological ordering of those poems is a desperate task for the most intrepid editor to engage in. Poems extending over a period of about forty years are here placed with almost complete indifference as to subject and order of composition. Yet internal evidence, carefully considered, goes a certain way to indicate the date at which certain poems were written, and warrants us in allotting at least two of them to the period which is now under consideration. One of these is the poem, *To my dearest Sister, Mistress Mercy Herrick* (818), which must have been written not later than 1612; for some time before that year, as Metcalfe's *Visitation of Suffolk* (1612) informs us, she had married a certain John Wingfield, son and heir of Humphrey Wingfield, Esq. of Brantham, Suffolk.

The other poem of this period is of a much



GOLDSMITH'S ROW, CHEAPSIDE, 1547, WITH PART OF THE PROCESSION OF EDWARD VI
TO HIS CORONATION AT WESTMINSTER
From a coeval picture at Cowdry in Sussex

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more sustained and ambitious character, and is entitled *A Country Life: to his Brother, Mr Thomas Herrick* (106). The opening verses of this poem indicate clearly that the poet's brother had recently exchanged a city for a country life:—

Thrice and above blest, my soul's half, art thou,
In thy both last and better vow ;
Could'st leave the city, for exchange, to see
The country's sweet simplicity.

The reference is to the important step in his career which Thomas Herrick took about the year 1610, when he left the business house in London of Mr Massam and settled himself on a country farm. Moreover, the poem is eloquent of the great content which Thomas and his newly married wife are finding in their rural sanctuary. But this content, however real it may have been during the first few months, was very short-lived. By the year 1613 the farm was anything but the Elysium which the poet speaks of. On May 12 of that year Thomas Herrick, writing to his uncle, Sir William, for help, says that he is "at present destitute of a convenient stay for myself and wife," and he begs to be appointed the tenant of one of his uncle's Leicestershire farms. Nor was the knowledge of his brother's sore straits withheld from Robert, the first of whose letters to his

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uncle from Cambridge was written with the express purpose of begging money for his brother.

From all this it may be inferred that the poem in question was written some time between 1610 and 1613, though in the form in which it appears in the *Hesperides* it has doubtless benefited by those careful repolishings upon which Herrick spent so much time during the long winter evenings at Dean Prior. Another, and probably earlier, version of the poem is, in fact, extant in Ashmole MS. 38, and has been carefully compared with the printed copy by Dr Grosart in his Memorial Introduction to Herrick's works.¹ But the poem, however altered, is of exceptional interest by virtue of the light which it throws upon the temper of the poet's mind and the direction and extent of his reading. It is obviously suggested by the second of Horace's Epodes, the famous *Beatus ille*, written—may we say, ironically?—in praise of a country life. But while the idea of the poem comes from Horace, there is nowhere any trace of servile imitation, and the pleasures of a country life which Herrick points out to his brother are rarely out of harmony with the surroundings of an English homestead.

Interesting in its disclosure of the young poet's feeling for nature and a country life, the poem

¹ pp. cli-cliv.

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is no less interesting in the light which it throws upon his reading. Echoes of classical authors abound, and the borrowings are in almost every case honourably acknowledged in Herrick's accustomed manner by the use of italics. Horace is clearly his first love, and in addition to the *Beatus ille* Epode, we trace reminiscences of more than one of the Odes. Thus he finds a place for those lines from the third song of the first book,—

Illi robur et æs triplex
Circa pectus erat qui fragilem truci
Commisit pelago ratem
Primus—

which Horace in his turn had drawn from the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus; and he shows the terseness of his style by expressing the thought within the compass of a single distich:—

A heart thrice walled with oak and brass that man
Had, first durst plough the ocean.

There is, too, much sententious moralising in the poem, and for this Herrick had recourse to Martial, Juvenal, and Aristotle's *Ethics*.¹ What is no less interesting is the echo of Renaissance poetry. Shakespeare's "To thine own self be true," seems to have been in the young poet's mind when he wrote the couplet,—

But to live round, and close, and wisely true
To thine own self, and known to few;—

¹ See Mr Pollard's note to this poem, i. p. 265-6.

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and there is abundant evidence that, in addition to Horace's Epode, Herrick had in mind, when writing the poem, Jonson's praise of a country life expressed in his verses "To Sir Robert Wroth." Jonson is describing the life of a country gentleman, Herrick that of a simple farmer ; but there is a similarity of idea and style throughout the two poems, and, what is even more important, the verse of the address "To Sir Robert Wroth" is imitated by the younger poet.

From all this it is clear that Herrick was conversant with the poetry of his own time, and also that, having received a fairly sound classical education while at school, he had found time for reading classic authors during the hours which were not claimed by the shop and the counting-house. In its wealth of classical allusion the poem compares well with that of Jonson, and shows, in particular, that intimacy with Roman life and ceremonial, and that frank transference of all this to English soil, which characterise much of his later poetry.

It was probably in the summer of 1613 that Herrick went up to Cambridge, and enrolled himself a member of St John's College. His mature age—he was nearly twenty-two—made him unwilling to register himself as an ordinary undergraduate, and he accordingly entered his college as a fellow-commoner. In so doing, he

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subjected himself to a heavy burden of expenditure, and, as his Cambridge letters show, an eternal lack of pence was his never-ending complaint during the whole of his stay at the University. His guardian-uncle, as we learn from his account-books preserved at Beaumanor, had doled out to his nephew certain sums of money during his apprenticeship. Under the date February 9, 1612, we find the entry, "Lent to Robarte Hericke more at his request £10," and a little later, "Pd to him the 5 March 1612 the sum of £42, 10s. od." From certain reckonings on the margin of the page on which these and other entries are made, we infer that these sums were deducted from a sum of £424, 8s. od. which had been left to Robert by his father, that he had drawn out £74, 8s. od., and that £350 were still in hand. On entering St John's College as a fellow-commoner, he was to receive £10 a quarter to cover the cost of board, clothes, and tuition: extraordinary items of expenditure were met by extraordinary grants.¹

¹ In Sir William's Account Books at Beaumanor we meet with the following entries: "July 1613, to Mr Miller for a College Pot, £5," and "4 Oct. 1615, Paid to Mr Woolley for Robins Gown and Hose, £2, 12s. od." The College-pot was the silver goblet of 10 oz., which, according to a decree at St John's College, every fellow-commoner must present to his college on admission. See Baker-Mayor, *History of St John's College, Cambridge*, p. 548. The date, July 1613, is of importance as indicating the time at which Herrick went up to the University.

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St John's College was at this time under the rule of the Welshman, Owen Gwyn, who, after some intriguing, had been appointed Master in the May of 1612. Gwyn was a cousin of the famous John Williams, a fellow of the college, and subsequently Lord Keeper and Bishop of Lincoln. St John's had somewhat fallen from the high estate which it had enjoyed in the preceding century, when Roger Ascham and Sir John Cheke were reckoned among its members ; but it was still, with Trinity and King's, one of the leading colleges of the University, and had on its roll during the first half of the seventeenth century the distinguished names of Thomas Wentworth, Earl of Strafford, John Williams, the Lord Keeper, and Thomas Fairfax, the great Lord-General of the Civil War. The doyen of its fellows was Andrew Downes, Regius Professor of Greek in the University, and a worthy successor to the great humanists of a former generation. Earlier inmates of the University, in whom perhaps the authorities took no special pride, but who would have found a genial comrade in Robert Herrick, were Robert Greene and Thomas Nash, the latter of whom left behind him, as a sobriquet for subsequent wassailers, the phrase, "a very Nash."

Among the Herrick Papers at Beaumanor are fourteen letters—the residue apparently of a once larger collection—written by Herrick to his

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uncle during his residence at Cambridge, and to these we naturally turn for information concerning the character of his college life. But in many ways these letters are most disappointing. They tell us nothing of the part which he took in the life of the University, nothing of college friendships, nothing of poetic activity. Their persistent burden, or, as Herrick himself expresses it, their "plainsong," is the request for money—" *mitte pecuniam*." As already stated, the agreement between nephew and uncle was that the former should receive a payment of £10 quarterly to meet all ordinary expenses. The ex-apprentice had not been long at the University before he discovered that £40 a year was a quite inadequate sum to meet his needs. His college was an expensive one, and he had entered it as a fellow-commoner. When Mr, afterwards Sir Simonds, D'Ewes entered the same college as a fellow-commoner in 1618, he tells us of the allowance made to him by his father: "The utmost I desired was but £60, my father conceived £50 to be sufficient; which I was willing to accept, being able to obtain no more, rather than to be at his allowance; because I easily foresaw how many sad differences I was likely to meet with upon every reckoning. I cannot deny but as this short allowance brought me one way much want and discontent, so another way it made me avoid unnecessary acquaintance, idle visits and many

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unnecessary expenses.”¹ If D'Ewes experienced want and discontent on £50 a year, the want and discontent of Herrick must have been proportionably greater on £40. What was worse was that even this small sum was remitted only with great reluctance and after considerable delay. In one of these letters, written from “Cambridg : St John’s,” he makes the following complaint : “ I have not as hitherto acquainted you with the chardg I live in, but your self can judg by my often (as now at this time) writing for mony, which when I doe, it is for no impertinent expens, but for constraind necessitie : for be your self the judg, when above twentie pounds will not suffice the house, not reckening with it commoditie for my self (I meane apparell nor other complements) nor tuition mony nor other sundrie occasions for chardges, this but considered, their is no reasonable soule but will kindly and indulgently censure of my lyfe and me. Had I but a competent estate to mayntayne my self to my title, I could presume of as soone atayning to y^e end of the efficient cause—my coming—as he that hath stronger cause and fortune : S^r, I know you understand me, and did you but know how disfurnished I came to Cambridg, without bedding (which I yet want) and other necessities, you would (as I now

¹ *Autobiography of Sir Simonds D'Ewes*, ed. Halliwell-Phillips, vol. i. p. 119.

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trust you will) better your thoughts towards me, considering of my forct expence. S^r, I entreat you to furnish me with ten pounds this quarter ; for the last mony which I receavd came not till the last quarter had almost spent it self, which now constraines me so suddenly to write for more. Good S^r, forbear to censure me as prodigall, for I endeavour rather to strengthen (then debilitate) my feeble familie fortune." From other letters we learn that the fellow-commoner has been compelled "to runne somewhat deepe into my Tailours debt," and that he needs money for books and his tutor's fees.

The following letter, the original of which I discovered among a collection of autographs in the possession of Canon Egerton Leigh of Richmond, Yorkshire, belongs to the same period, and is written in the same strain as that quoted above :—

CAMBRIDG, ST JOHN'S.

S^r, the first place testifies my deutie, the second only reiterats the former letter of which (as I may justly wonder) I heard no answeare, neither concerning the payment or receat of the letter, (it is best knowne to your self). Upon which ignorance I have sent this oratour entreating you to paye to M^r Adrian Marius, bookseller of the blackfryers, the sum of 10 li, from whome so soone as it is payd, I shall receive a dew acknowledgment. I shall not

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need to amplyfy my sense, for this warrants
sufficiencie. I expect your countenance and
your futherance to my well beeing who hath
power to command my service to eternitie.
Heaven be your guide to direct you to per-
fection which is the end of mans endeavour.
I expect an answeare from M^r Adrian, con-
cerning the receipt.

ROBIN HEARICK,
obliged to your virtue eternally.

[Endorsement]

“The right wor^{ll} his loving
uncle, S^r William Hearick,
dwelling at London in
great Wood-Street, this.¹

The humble and obsequious tone in which Herrick addresses his uncle in these letters would seem to indicate that his college expenses came out of the knightly goldsmith's own pocket, but references in them to his “feebly ebbing estate” place it beyond doubt that such was not the case. A curious entry in Sir William's account books also discloses the fact that while the impecunious student was finding infinite difficulty in obtaining

¹ This letter was presented to Canon Leigh's grandmother, Lady Sitwell of Rempstone, Derbyshire, by a former proprietor of Beaumanor, early in the nineteenth century; its discovery raises the question whether other letters of the poet's are hidden away somewhere in private autograph collections.

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his quarterly allowance of £10, the wealthy uncle was borrowing hundreds of pounds from the nephew. The entry in question is as follows: "My Nephew, Robert Hericke of Cambridge, the 25th March 1614, I owe him upon a Bond to be paid at my House at 3 Months 300 li." Dr Grosart in his Memorial Introduction has emptied the vials of his wrath upon the head of "the closefisted old knight" with such zeal and copiousness that subsequent biographers are for all time relieved of a similar obligation. Yet one may be allowed to express the opinion that Sir William was making a churlish repayment to the orphan son for the generous treatment which he, when a raw apprentice, had received from the father. The foundation of Sir William's princely fortune was laid in Nicholas Herrick's shop in the Goldsmiths' Row, Cheapside, and this fact ought not to have been forgotten when, thirty years later, Nicholas's son was struggling with poverty at Cambridge.

It is unfortunate that Herrick's Cambridge letters tell us nothing of college friendships. The verses in the *Hesperides* addressed to "peculiar friends" are many in number, and some of the friendships which he formed were of long standing. As he was six years older than the average freshman when he entered the University, it would be natural for him to look for acquaintances among the senior members and

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fellows of the University ; and, as a matter of fact, it was with a fellow of his own college that one of his most lasting friendships was formed. On March 26, 1613, a certain John Weekes of Devonshire was admitted a fellow of St John's.¹ This Weekes seems to have been the son of Simon and Mary Weekes of Broadwood Kelly in the county of Devon,² and though senior to Herrick in academic standing, he was probably about the same age. To this "peculiar friend" three of the *Hesperides* poems are addressed, and they show clearly that the ties of friendship were of the closest. The careers of the two men run a curiously parallel course, and we shall meet with Weekes in the company of Herrick on more than one occasion in this biographical sketch. Another intimate friend of after years, whose acquaintance the poet must have made at Cambridge, was Clipseby, afterwards Sir Clipseby, Crew, the eldest son of Sir Ranulphe Crew, who was Speaker of the House of Commons in 1614 and Lord Chief Justice in 1625. We learn from the Baker Memoirs³ that Clipseby Crew was a student at St John's College, Cambridge ; and as he was born in 1599, his residence at the University must have extended over almost the same period that Herrick spent there. To this friend

¹ See Register of Fellows admitted to St John's College. Baker-Mayor, p. 293.

² Vivian, *Visitation of Devon*, 1620.

³ P. 492.

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several of the *Hesperides* poems are addressed, and the verses show that their author found in the son of the Lord Chief Justice a true friend and patron. He celebrated his marriage, which took place in 1625, with the most beautiful of all his epithalamia, and in later poems he mourned the death of his wife and his daughter. Other verses to Sir Clipseby represent that knight as a sharer in some of the poet's bacchanalian joys, and the poem entitled *A Hymn to Sir Clipseby Crew* (427), written apparently after a quarrel had for a time estranged the two friends, shows the warmth of the poet's affection.

It is not difficult to follow Herrick in his course of study at the University. Seventeenth-century Cambridge still clung somewhat tenaciously to much of that outworn medieval curriculum which made logic and rhetoric the chief studies of the quadriennium or four years' course leading to the bachelor's degree. During his freshman's year he must have devoted himself chiefly to rhetoric, acquiring a knowledge of that subject by the aid of Quintilian's *Institutes*, Cicero's *Orations* and the rhetorical works of Hermogenes the Greek. During the two succeeding years, as junior and senior sophister, he read mainly logic. For this the writings of Aristotle still formed the chief theme of study, though the subversive *Dialectica* of Peter Ramus had by this time got a firm hold of the English universities, and appeared among

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the text-books of the Cambridge undergraduates.¹

Of humanistic teaching proper, as far as a student's preparation for his degree went, there was very little; though Herrick may very well have attended the public lectures of the Regius Professor of Greek, Andrew Downes, and listened to his exposition of Demosthenes or Thucydides. We may also be sure that he did not neglect the Roman poets, whose acquaintance he first made in his school days, and who have left so clear an impress upon his poetry. Horace, Catullus, and the Roman elegists were, doubtless, a part of his daily fare.

Sir Simonds D'Ewes, who, as we have seen, entered St John's in 1618, tells us a good deal in his autobiography concerning his course of studies at the University. We learn that he attended Divinity Acts, Problems and Commonplaces in the Public Schools, listened to George Herbert's public lectures on rhetoric, and to those of Dr Downes on Demosthenes' *De Corona*; also that he read Aristotle's *Physics*, *Politics*, and *Ethics*, Florus's *Roman History*, and studied his logic in various manuals. For lighter moments he had Gellius's *Attic Nights* and Macrobius's *Saturnals*. These last two works, which supply in an informal manner much antiquarian knowledge of Greek and Roman

¹ Mullinger, *The University of Cambridge*, vol. ii., p. 404 f.

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life, may very well have been included among Herrick's store of books, and have furnished him with that acquaintance with Roman social life and ceremonial which is so often at his service as a poet, and gives to his verses their classical and pagan flavour.

The period during which Herrick was pursuing his studies at Cambridge was not remarkable for the exemplary behaviour of the students. Mr Mullinger, indeed, informs us that at no period do we find their conduct more unfavourably represented. They were engaged in perennial conflicts with the townsmen and the watch, and, contrary to all regulations, they attended cock-fights and bull-baitings, dined and drank, armed themselves with swords and rapiers, and wore apparel of velvet and silk ; a few desperate ones even bathed in the river ! D'Ewes, again, who was something of a prig, confesses that "swearing, drinking, rioting, and hatred of all piety and virtue under false and adulterate names did abound there [St John's] and generally in all the University." It may readily be granted that Herrick, with the hot blood of Norse ancestors tingling in his veins, partook of as much of the "cakes and ale" of university life as proctorial vigilance and a slender purse would admit. The author of the *Welcome to Sack*—Was it perhaps an effusion of these Cambridge days?—was no precisian, and could ruffle it with the best of the

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"high sons of pith " who met together in the taverns of Cambridge.

It is difficult, if not impossible, to say what poems of Herrick belong to these university days. None of those published in the *Hesperides* contain, as far as I have been able to discover, any direct allusions to this important period in his career, but it is hard to believe that his muse, which had vouchsafed *The Country Life* in his prentice-years, could have been altogether silent now. One is tempted to associate the love-lyrics and drinking-songs chiefly with the succeeding period, which Herrick spent in London at the feet of Ben Jonson, but some of these may very well have been written at Cambridge.

It was Herrick's lot, during the first half of his life, to be an eye-witness of pageants of more than ordinary splendour. These had begun in the days of his childhood when Lord Mayor uncles and Lady Mayoress aunts were borne in state to the Guildhall, and when, nearer home, he beheld the royal processions entering the palace of Hampton Court. As apprentice to the goldsmith-uncle, whose business took him frequently to court, he must again have seen a good deal of the life of the Stuart courtiers, and now that he had left London for the University, he was destined to behold scenes of festive splendour which might compare even with the pageantry of Whitehall. Early in the winter of 1614-15,

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an intimation reached Cambridge that the King and his court would honour the University with a visit in the following March. The news must have caused a flutter of pleasurable expectancy throughout the colleges, and preparations were at once made to give the visitors a sumptuous reception. St John's College, in accordance with its status in the University, took, with Trinity, a leading part in these preparations, and Herrick, though only an impecunious fellow-commoner, must have shared in the general excitement. The news of the royal visit spread to Oxford, and we find William Herrick, the eldest son of Sir William, and a fellow-commoner of St John's College, writing to his Cambridge cousin and proposing to share his lodgings with him on the occasion of the King's visit. His tutor, however, Mr Christopher Wren, in a letter to Lady Herrick, disapproves of this plan and begs, "yf it soe like your Ladiship, that I might have him with me inseparablye, both on the way and there too."¹

The University authorities at Cambridge, having in mind the seemly behaviour of the students on so important an occasion as a royal visit, passed special ordinances. Having regard to "the fearfull enormitye and excesse of apparell seene in all degrees" of students, they expressly forbade the wearing of "vast bands, huge cuffs,

¹ Nichols, *History of County of Leicester*, iii. p. 163.

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shoe-roses, tufts, locks and topps of hare, un-beseeming that modesty and carridge of students in so renowned an Universitye,"¹ and threatened with instant expulsion the undergraduate who should offend the author of the *Counterblast* by "taking tobacco" in either St Mary's Church or Trinity College Hall.

The King lodged in Trinity College, but the Chancellor of the University, the Earl of Suffolk, kept house at St John's, at the rate of £1000 and five tuns of wine a day.² To entertain James during his four days' sojourn at the University, elaborate Latin comedies, together with Acts or Disputations, had been devised. The Disputation, that exhibition of mental gladiatorship which was an heirloom of the Middle Ages, and to which the universities still clung, was a form of entertainment peculiarly attractive to a monarch who loved hot debate as much as he feared cold steel. Several Disputations were held, but the subject which attracted chief attention, and which interested the King most of all, was one which concerned the reasoning powers of dogs. "Can dogs syllogise?" was the form in which the question was worded, and the disputants were two learned divines, Matthew Wren, afterwards Bishop of Ely, and John

¹ Nichols, *Progresses of James I.*, iii. 44; Mullinger, *The University of Cambridge*, ii. 516.

² Letter of Mr Chamberlain to Sir Dudley Carleton, quoted by Nichols, *Progresses of James I.*, vol. iii. p. 48.

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Preston, the puritan, soon to be elected Master of Emmanuel. The arguments of the latter, who maintained the affirmative, were ingenious. "The major proposition, present in the mind of a harrier," he declared, "is this: 'The hare has gone either this way or that way.' With his nose he smells out the minor. 'She has not gone that way'; and he then arrives at the conclusion: 'Ergo, this way,' with open mouth." Thereupon followed the usual logic-chopping. Did the dog possess sapience, or was it only sagacity?—until at last the royal listener clenched the argument in favour of Preston by relating an incident from his own hunting experiences.¹

Following upon the Disputations, came the Comedies. The St John's men had a play of their own, *Aemilia*, which they performed on the first night of the King's visit, but the *pièce de résistance* was the comedy of *Ignoramus*, which was performed on the evening of March 8th. The author of this play was George Ruggle, formerly a pensioner of St John's, but now a fellow of Clare Hall, where the play was acted. As a fellow-commoner of the University, Herrick was entitled to a seat at the back of the hall during the performance, and we may be sure that he did not fail to be present. The comedy, we are told, proved an amazing success; the King followed the development of the plot and

¹ Mullinger, *op. cit.*, ii. 520.

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shared in the laughter called forth by the satiric hits at the lawyers and the ridicule of their debased law-latin.

The fun which was pointed at the legal profession in the comedy of *Ignoramus* was, perhaps, not too well received by Herrick himself; for about this time his thoughts were turning towards the law as a profession. He was still an undergraduate, but the sense of advancing years and a slowly ebbing patrimony made him anxious for the future. There is nothing to indicate what projects had been formed as to his future career at the time when he entered the University, in 1613, but after a residence there of three years, he had made up his mind to enter the legal profession. With this purpose in view, he determined to leave St John's College and become a member of Trinity Hall, which was specially devoted to the study of the law. In making this change, he also had in view the retrenchment of his expenses. He announces his intention to his uncle in a letter which belongs to the year 1616:

“After my abundant thanks for your last great love (worthie Sir), proud of your favoure and kindness shewne by my Ladie to my unworthy selfe, thus I laye open my selfe; that for as much as my continuance will not long consist in the spheare where I now move, I make known my thoughts, and modestly crave your counsell,

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whether it were better for me to direct my study towards the lawe or not ; which if I should (as it will not be impertinent), I can with facilitie labour my self into another colledg appointed for the like end and studyes, where I assure myself the charge will not be so great as where I now exist ; I make bold freely to acquaint you with my thoughts ; and I entreat you answeare me : this being most which checks me, that my time (I trust) beeing short, it may be to a lesser end and smaller purpose ; but that shalbe as you shall lend direction. . . .”

Sir William Herrick had apparently no objection to his nephew becoming a lawyer, and was certainly not the man to frustrate any project which made for economy ; and so the next letter which reached him from Cambridge is headed “Trinitie Hall.” Herrick’s connection with Trinity Hall is interesting, for when the Hall was founded in the fourteenth century, its first master was a collateral ancestor and namesake of the poet, Robert Eyrick, who had died Bishop of Lichfield in 1385. When Herrick entered the Hall, its master was Dr Clement Corbett, and the number of its members amounted to only about sixty. The letter in which he informs his uncle of the change which he has made is not written in the best of spirits :—

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TRINITIE HALL, CAMB.

S^R.—The confidence I have of your bothe virtuous and generous disposition makes me (though with some honest reluctance) the seldomer to sollicite you; for I have so incorporated beleef into me, that I cannot chuse but perswade my self that (though absent) I stand imprinted in your memorie; and the remembrance of my last beeing at London servd for an earnest motive (which I trust lives yet unperisht) to the effectuating of my desire, which is not but in modesty ambitious, and consequently virtuous; but, where freeness is evident, there needs no feare for forwardness; and I doubt not (because fayth gives boldness) but that Heaven, togeither with your self, will bring my ebbing estate to an indifferent tyde; meanwhile I hope I have (as I presume you know) changd my colledg for one where the quantitie of expence wilbe shortned, by reason of the privacie of the house, where I propose to live recluse, till Time contract me to some other calling, striving now with myself (retayning upright thoughts) both sparingly to live, and thereby to shun the current of expence." Then follows the usual request for £10.

Before Time could contract him to another calling, it was necessary for him to take the degree of bachelor. Owing to the expenses incumbent on graduation, his removal to a

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college where the cost of living was less had not relieved him of the burden of impecuniosity. In his failure to secure a sufficient competence from his uncle, he realises that he "must crie with the afflicted '*usquequo, usquequo, Domine,*'" and hopes against hope that his uncle will remember him "like a trew Maecenas." In January, 1617, he underwent the ordeal of the various Acts which were required for the passing of the examination, and in the same month his name, "Robertus Hearick," appears on the register of bachelors of arts. The successful passing of his "Commencement" is announced to his uncle as follows :

CAMB.

Sir, that which makes my letter to be abortive and borne before maturitie, is and hath been my Commencment, which I have now overgonn, though I confess with many a throe and pinches of the purse ; but it was necessarie, and the prize was worthie the hazarde ; which makes me less sensible of the expence, by reason of a titular prerogative—et bonum est prodire in bono. The essence of my writing is (as heretofore) to entreat you to paye for my use to M^r Arthour Johnson, bookseller in Paules church yard the ordinarie summe of tenn pounds, and that with as much sceleritie as you maye, though I could wish chardges had leaden wings and Tortice feet to come upon me ; sed votis puerilibus opto. S^r,

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I fix my hopes on Time and you; still gazing
for an happie flight of birdes, and the refreshing
blast of a second winde. Doubtfull as yet of
either Fortunes, I live, hoarding up provision
against the assault of either. Thus I salute your
vertues.

HOPEFUL R. HEARICK.

The young graduate's better spirits are manifest in his style as well as his signature. The "titular prerogative" has been won, and with a boldness born of success, he even ventures to send his quarterly request for ten pounds before the proper time.¹ The future is still uncertain, but there has been enough of despondency, and now, in the first flush of academic honours, he finds it possible to fix his hopes on so barren a prospect as the generosity of his uncle, Sir William Herrick.

With his graduation in 1617, Herrick's residence at the University in all probability came to an end. Dr Grosart and others have assumed that he remained there until 1620, when he proceeded M.A., but, under the circumstances, nothing is more unlikely. For some time past residence for the degree of master had ceased to be compulsory, and, as a result, the resident graduates of the University formed only "a small

¹ This I take to be the meaning of the phrase, "abortive and borne before maturitie," as applied to the letter which he is writing.

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minority composed almost exclusively of clerical fellows of colleges, whose time was mainly given to the all-absorbing controversial theology of the day, and to the composition of 'commonplaces' to be delivered in the college chapel."¹ Now Herrick was never a fellow of his college, and it is by no means certain that, at the time when he graduated, his wish was to enter the church. A year before, as we have seen, his thoughts were directed to the law. Moreover, his ripe age and his lack of money indicate that he would not remain at the University longer than was necessary, and the termination of the letters to his uncle at this time also gives colour to the view that he quitted Cambridge in 1617. Since residence was no longer compulsory, the course of study for the mastership had become quite insignificant. It consisted only in the keeping of one or two "acts," and the composition of a single declamation. This probably presented little difficulty to Herrick when, three years later, he took the higher degree, and was enrolled as a master of arts at the registry.

In 1617, then, Herrick packed up his few personal belongings, took "Hobson's choice," and bade farewell to the University. He left behind him a small circle of friends, including Weekes and Crew, and a rather heavy burden of debts. In the second report of the Historical

¹ Mullinger, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 414.

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Manuscripts Commission (1870), Mr H. T. Riley published certain documents preserved at Trinity Hall, included among which are entries in the Steward's Book of debts owing to the college by "Robert Herricke." The entries are for the years 1623 and 1630, and the sums owed are £3, 17s. 7d. for the former year, and £10, 16s. 9d. for the latter. Dr Grosart attempted to father these debts upon another Robert Herrick, the poet's cousin, and second son of Sir William Herrick. But there is nothing to show that this youth, who passed through Christ Church, Oxford, and Lincoln's Inn, was ever a member of Trinity Hall, or, indeed, of the University of Cambridge. The probability is, therefore, that Mr Riley was right in his identification, and what we know of the poet's impecuniosity at the University supports this view.

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CHAPTER III

“SEALED OF THE TRIBE OF BEN”

THE twelve years which elapse between Herrick's graduation at Cambridge in 1617, and his induction as vicar of Dean Prior in 1629, form one of the most obscure periods in his long life. This obscurity enjoins wary walking on the part of a biographer. At no other point in the story is the temptation to lay undue weight upon a slender thread of evidence so great. In attempting to unravel the tangled thread of these all-important years, almost our only clue is that afforded by the poet himself, and, as a single instance will show, Herrick plays fast and loose with the would-be chroniclers of his life. Because he writes an epitaph on a person—to wit, Prudence Baldwin, the faithful housekeeper of Dean Prior days—and lays her in her “little urn,” it must not for a moment be assumed that she is dead; the parish register at Dean Prior records that she lived at least thirty years after her epitaph was written, saw her octogenarian master put into *his* little urn, and his pulpit occupied by his successor. The reader, therefore, in following

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the story of the poet's life during these obscure years, must be prepared to find, instead of the record of established facts, a long series of more or less plausible suppositions. He will frequently encounter the words "probable" and "not impossible," and must rest content with these until firmer ground is reached.

When Herrick left the University in 1617, it is natural to suppose that he made his way back to London. His Cambridge letters tell of visits paid to the capital in undergraduate days, and it was there that most of his friends and relations were settled. It is uncertain whether his mother was still living at Hampton. Some time before 1629, the year of her death, she had left that home, and had gone to reside with her married daughter at Brantham in Suffolk.¹ His brother Nicholas, however, was residing in London with his wife and family, and several of Herrick's poems point to a close friendship between the brothers. Sir William Herrick, too, probably passed a certain portion of the year at his business-house in Wood Street, but there is nothing to indicate that his nephew spent much time in his society. With the poet's departure from Cambridge, Sir William Herrick disappears from our view. He lived at Beaumanor until 1653, but we note, without surprise, that he finds no place in the poet's "white temple of my heroes,"

¹ Metcalfe, *Visitation of Suffolk in 1612*.



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the “eternal calendar” which promises immortality to so many persons bearing the poet’s name. Various relations on his mother’s side—the families of Stone and Soame of whom we shall hear more presently—were also either residing in London, or in some way connected with it.

As we saw in the preceding chapter, it seems to have been Herrick’s purpose during the latter portion of his stay at Cambridge to take up a legal career as soon as he had finished with the University. How far he carried this project is uncertain; his name does not appear on the register of the Inner or Middle Temple, Gray’s Inn, or Lincoln’s Inn, though some of the poems in the *Hesperides* show that he numbered amongst his friends several persons intimately associated with the law. In any case, he had, by the year 1627 at the latest, abandoned the law for the church. We have no knowledge of the date of his ordination, and it is particularly unfortunate that in Dr M. Hutton’s *Extracts from the Registers of the Bishop of London*, preserved in the Manuscript Room at the British Museum (Harleian MSS., 6955-6), and giving a list of clergymen ordained within the London diocese, there is an hiatus for the years 1620-7. It is probable, however, that his ordination did not take place long before 1627, when he was appointed chaplain to the Duke of Buckingham

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on his military expedition to the Isle of Rhé. We have, accordingly, a period of no less than ten years, during which we learn nothing of Herrick except what he chooses to tell us in his poems. These make it clear that he moved freely at this time in some of the most important circles of London life, was intimate with city fathers and their wives, with noblemen and noblewomen, with musicians, men of letters, and men of law ; but, in spite of his many friendships, his name has as yet been sought in vain among the printed and unprinted records of the period. There is no mention of him prior to 1629 in any of the State Papers, or in any of the valuable collections of records published by the Historical Manuscripts Commission, with the exception of that reference to his debts at Trinity Hall, already alluded to. The letter-writers of the time are also silent concerning him. James Howell, who, when in London, moved in the same circles as Herrick, and, like him, was able to subscribe himself "son and servitor" to Ben Jonson, never mentions his name in his *Familiar Letters*.

It would also be interesting to know how the impecunious Cambridge student of former years managed to meet the expenses of fashionable London life during the whole of this period. We know that he had patrons like Endymion Porter, Mildmay Fane, Earl of Westmorland, and the

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princely Philip, Earl of Pembroke, who supplied him with what he happily calls “the oil of maintenance”; but at what period in his career he first won their patronage is uncertain. But whether he obtained some lucrative appointment at Court or elsewhere, or was dependent for his sustenance on patrons and rich relations, or whether he had learnt Mrs Rawdon Crawley’s art of living well on nothing a year, one thing is certain : there is throughout his poems, which tell us so much of his state of mind and body, no mention of poverty until we reach the time of his ejection from Dean Prior in 1647. He has left us no “Compleynt to his Purse,” and even hastens to assure his readers in his *Farewell unto Poetry*,¹ which was almost certainly written in 1629, that it is not lack of money which leads him to the priesthood. Apostrophising the muse of poetry as the almighty nature that gives

Food,
White fame and resurrection to the good,

he earnestly bids her turn from him at this crisis in his career :

But unto me be only hoarse, since now
(Heaven and my soul bear record of my vow)
I my desires screw from thee, and direct
Them and my thoughts to that sublim’d respect
And conscience unto priesthood ; *'tis not need*

¹ Poems not included in the *Hesperides*, Pollard, ii. 263.

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(*The scarecrow unto mankind*) that doth breed
Wiser conclusions in me, since I know
I've more to bear my charge than way to go ;
Or had I not, I'd stop the spreading itch
Of craving more, so in conceit be rich.
But 'tis the God of Nature who intends
And shapes my function for more glorious ends.¹

The story of Herrick's London years, as far as we can piece it together by the help of his poems, is the story of his friendships. His friends were many, and thanks to the geniality of his nature, to which his poems bear abundant testimony, he moved freely in circles somewhat widely separated from each other. The circle which he would most naturally enter when he first came up from Cambridge was that of his own family—the circle of prosperous city merchants, alderman uncles and lady mayoress aunts. On his mother's side were the "honoured kinsmen" to whom some of the *Hesperides* poems are addressed—Sir William Soame, his brother Sir Thomas, who at a later period held the posts of Sheriff of London and Middlesex, Lord Mayor of London and M.P. for the city ; also Mr Stephen Soame, the son of either Sir William or Sir Thomas, and Sir Richard Stone. On his father's side there were, in addition to his merchant brother Nicholas, his wife and family—to whom, according to Nichols' *History of Leicestershire*,

¹ ii. 265.

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no less than seven poems are addressed¹—the various branches of the family of Wheeler, one member of which, John Wheeler the goldsmith, had married a daughter of Mr Robert Herrick of Leicester, the poet's uncle. Towards one of the Wheelers he seems to have felt something deeper than kinship. This was Elizabeth Wheeler, who may, perhaps, be identified with the Elizabeth, daughter of Edmund Wheeler, that was baptized in St Vedast's Church, Foster Lane, on July 20, 1589. He celebrates her beauty in three of his most graceful poems (Nos. 130, 263, 1068), wooing her, somewhat after the manner of the pastoralists, under the name of Amaryllis.

If Herrick was free of the society of city merchants, their wives and pretty daughters, he also had access to the literary circles of the time, and forgathered with poets and wits in the London taverns. His open *sesame* to this society was, of course, his poetry, which was now poured forth in no stinting measure. Of the delight which he found in this tavern life, and of his willingness to “let the canakin clink,” there can be no question. His bacchanalian verses and his anacreontics in praise of a life of boon

¹ These are the following: *To his Brother, Nicholas Herrick*, (1100); *To his Sister-in-law, Susanna Herrick* (977); *Upon his Kinswoman, Mistress Elizabeth Herrick* (376); *To his Kinsman, Thomas Herrick* (983); *To his Kinswoman, Mistress Susanna Herrick* (522); *Upon his Kinswoman, Mistress Bridget Herrick* (564); *To his Nephew to be prosperous in Painting* (384).

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fellowship are many and whole-hearted, while his *Ode for Ben Jonson* (911) is an eloquent tribute of his devotion to the "father" who presided over his "sons and servitors" at those

Lyric feasts,
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the Triple Tun.

Many of the most distinguished men of the age were included among the frequenters of these taverns. Of poets and dramatists, in addition to Jonson and Herrick, there were Field, Brome, Cartwright, Randolph, Suckling and Waller; statesmanship and diplomacy were represented by Lord Falkland, Edward Hyde, and Sir Kenelm Digby; the church sent George Morley, the future Bishop of Winchester, and Richard Corbet, the future Bishop of Oxford and Norwich. From the *Leges Conviviales*, which were engraved in letters of gold upon black marble above the chimney-piece in the Apollo Chamber in the tavern of The Devil and St Dunstan, Temple Bar, we learn that ladies were not excluded from the revels,—

"Nec lectæ fœminæ repudiantor"—

but the doors were shut fast against the dullard, the lewd fop, and the whey-faced precisian;

"Idiota, insulsus, tristis, turpis abesto."

In this congenial society Herrick's muse was not idle. We learn from one of his poems, *His*

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Lachrymae (371), written years afterwards at Dean Prior, that he was known to his comrades of these London days as “the music of a feast;” and it is likely enough that many of his bacchanalian and anacreontic verses, including the magnificent lines, *To Live Merrily and trust to Good Verses* (201), were specially indited for the ears of the chosen comrades who met in the Apollo Chamber, or at the Sun, the Dog, or the Triple Tun. Towards Ben Jonson himself his feelings were ever loyal and devout. When the “Master” died in 1637, Herrick did not contribute anything to the volume of memorial verses, entitled *Jonsonus Virbius*, which was edited by Bishop Duppa in 1638, and which consisted of tributes paid to the dead poet’s memory by a vast number of members of the “tribe.” But the Devonshire vicar was by no means silent on that occasion. His *Ode for Ben Jonson*, already referred to, and his epigram upon him, beginning “After the rare arch-poet, Jonson, died” (382), equal in the expression of admiration, as they surpass in poetic worth, any of the poems included in *Jonsonus Virbius*. The truth is—and it is one to which we shall have to return later—that Herrick recognised himself as the “arch-poet’s” son in a very special manner: Jonson was his father as head of the tribe of which he had been sealed a member, but he was also his poetic father, to whom he looked for guidance in

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the composition of his verses. It is in this spirit of discipleship that one of the airiest of his lyrics, his *Prayer to Ben Jonson*, is written (604):—

When I a verse shall make,
Know I have pray'd thee,
For old religion's sake,
Saint Ben, to aid me.

Make the way smooth for me,
When I, thy Herrick,
Honouring thee, on my knee
Offer my lyric.

Candles I'll give to thee,
And a new altar,
And thou, Saint Ben, shalt be
Writ in my Psalter.

Herrick's devotion to Jonson was apparently of an exclusive nature; of the other members of the tribe, and of contemporary men of letters outside of it, he tells us very little. He contributed a commendatory poem to the 1647 edition of Beaumont and Fletcher's works, but there is nothing to indicate that he was acquainted with either of these dramatists. He honoured Selden, Denham and Charles Cotton with verses, and seems to have been on intimate terms with the last named; but of Suckling, Carew, Randolph, and the other stars in the Caroline firmament, there is no mention.

Apart from Jonson, it would seem as though

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Herrick lived on more intimate terms with the musicians of Charles's court than with the courtier-poets and other men of letters. This was largely due to the fact that several of the lyrics in the *Hesperides* and *Noble Numbers* were written with the express purpose of being set to music and sung before the King in Whitehall. This brought him into touch with both William and Henry Lawes, and also with other leading musicians of the time, Robert Ramsay and Nicholas Lanieri. To each of the two brothers, William and Henry Lawes, Herrick devotes a poem (No. 907 and 851), and the language in which he addresses them is full of cordiality.

A study of the published song-books of the seventeenth century discloses the fact that about a dozen of the songs of the *Hesperides* were set to music by Henry or William Lawes. In Henry Lawes's three books of *Ayres and Dialogues*, published from 1653 onwards, we find the following:—"To a Gentlewoman objecting to his Gray Hairs" (164), "The Primrose" (580), "Leander's Obsequies" (119), "The Bag of the Bee" (92), and the dialogue-poem entitled "The Kiss" (329). Most of these reappear in John Playford's *Treasury of Music*, published in 1669, together with the following: "To Elizabeth Wheeler, under the name of the Lost Shepherdess" (263), "The Willow Garland" (425), and

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the famous song "To Anthea—Bid me to Live" (267). The composer of the music in the case of each of the above lyrics was Henry Lawes. His brother William set to music "To the Virgins to make much of Time" (208), better known as "Gather ye Rosebuds," and the two dialogue-poems, "Charon and Philomel" (730) and "The New Charon" (ii. p. 270); these also find a place in Playford's collection, together with the lyric, "How Lilies came White (190)," set to music by Nicholas Lanieri.

Very little reference has so far been made to Herrick's love-poems, and it is now time to turn our attention to the "lovely mistresses," the "fresh and fragrant mistresses," to whom these are addressed, or whose freshness and fragrance they celebrate. The gift of verse, which opened to him the doors of the Apollo Chamber at Temple Bar, also made him a *persona grata* with some of the Stuart beauties. One of these, "Mistress Katherine Bradshaw, the lovely," seems on one occasion to have placed a laurel wreath upon his brow, and to have won for herself thereby that amaranthine wreath which the poet promises to all who are enshrined in his verses.¹ His "mistresses," as the most casual reader of his poems must be aware, are many. Here are some of them:—

¹ *To Mistress Katherine Bradshaw, the lovely, that crowned him with Laurel* (224).

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UPON THE LOSS OF HIS MISTRESSES (39).

I have lost, and lately, these
Many dainty mistresses :
Stately Julia, prime of all :
Sappho next, a principal :
Smooth Anthea, for a skin
White, and heaven-like crystalline :
Sweet Electra, and thé choice
Myrrha, for the lute and voice :
Next Corinna, for her wit,
And the graceful use of it :
With Perilla : all are gone ;
Only Herrick's left alone
For to number sorrow by
Their departures hence, and die.

The list is extensive, but by no means complete. Elsewhere we meet with Lucia, with whom he plays at stool-ball for sugar-cakes and wine ; Dianeme, from whose finger he sucks the sting of a “fretful bee,” moralising as he does it ; Biancha, whom, when he is blind, he will be able to follow by her perfumes ; Perenna, who is invited to dress his tomb with smallage,¹ cypress-twigs and tears ; Phillis, whom he invites to share the sweets of a country life with him ; Silvia, the patient saint, and Oenone. To these, finally, must be added the ladies with real names to whom he professes love—Mistress Elizabeth Wheeler, his kinswoman ; Mistress Dorothy Parsons, the daughter of the organist at Westminster Abbey ; Mistress Amy Potter, the daughter of his pre-

¹ Water parsley.

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decessor in the living at Dean Prior ; and Mistress Dorothy Keneday. Some of Herrick's critics, placing charity above truth, would have us believe that these mistress-poems belong exclusively to the poet's "wild, unhallowed times," before he took orders, but there is surprisingly little to adduce in proof of such a theory ; it is, indeed, almost certain that some of them are to be associated with his life in Devonshire. The references in these poems to grey hairs, advancing years, and the approach of death, do not, of course, count for much in determining their date ; lyric poets from Anacreon onwards have at all times loved to dwell on such things. But there is one poem, obviously written only a few years before the publication of *Hesperides*, which sufficiently refutes the idea that Julia, Anthea, Corinna, and all the other "dainty mistresses," belong exclusively to the London years. The poem is entitled *The Bad Season makes the Poet Sad* (612) and reads as follows :—

Dull to myself, and almost dead to these
My many fresh and fragrant mistresses :
Lost to all music now, since every thing
Puts on the semblance here of sorrowing.
Sick is the land to the heart, and doth endure
More dangerous faintings by her desp'rate cure.
But if that golden age would come again,
And Charles here rule, as he before did reign ;
If smooth and unperplexed the seasons were,
As when the sweet Maria lived here ;

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I should delight to have my curls half drown'd
In Tyrian dews, and head with roses crown'd ;
And once more yet, ere I am laid out dead,
Knock at a star with my exalted head.

This poem evidently belongs to the period of the Civil War, when Queen Henrietta Maria was abroad, and the power of Charles was tottering to its fall. It is hard, too, to believe that the most beautiful of all his mistress-poems, *Corinna's going a-Maying* (178), could have been written amid London associations. The atmosphere of the poem is that of the country, and the charm with which the poet has invested his description of the May-day festival accords with the life of Dean Prior rather than with that of Westminster or the taverns of the City.

A more difficult point to determine is that of the reality, or unreality, of these many mistresses. Are they real women whom Herrick knew and paid court to, or are they dream-children, created by a poet's fancy, and calling no man father? Mr Edmund Gosse has discussed this matter at some length in his essay on Herrick in *Seventeenth Century Studies*, but most of the poet's editors have refrained from expressing any very definite opinion. Mr Gosse refuses to believe in Perilla, Silvia, Anthea, and the *deae minores*, but has a very real faith in Julia of the “black eyes, double chin, and strawberry-cream complexion.”¹ He thinks

¹ *Seventeenth Century Studies*, p. 123.

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that she belonged to the poet's Cambridge years,¹ and that she died before 1629. He even hints at a serious *liaison* between the poet and Julia, and regards her as the mother of the girl to whom is addressed the poem entitled *Mr Herrick: His Daughter's Dowry*.² Julia is certainly the mistress who produces on our minds the greatest impression of reality, and we may therefore consider her first. If she elude our grasp, we may dismiss the remaining mistresses of classic name as airy nothings, without further comment. The poet mentions Julia in some sixty poems of the *Hesperides*, and confesses that of his "many dainty mistresses" she is "prime of all." From her he takes affectionate leave before starting on his voyage³—the voyage was probably that to the Isle of Rhé in 1627; he bids her burn his poems if he shall at his death leave them unperfected,⁴ and upon her he lays other solemn charges, if she shall outlive him.

Yet with all this sincerity of utterance and semblance of reality, it is not at all certain that Julia is anything more than a poetic fiction. Though she is celebrated in poem after poem, she leaves upon the mind a very shadowy impression. We hear much of the ruby redness of her lips, the

¹ Mr Gosse, writing in 1872, believed that Herrick remained at Cambridge until appointed vicar of Dean Prior.

² "Poems not included in *Hesperides*," Pollard, ii. 260.

³ *His Sailing from Julia* (35).

⁴ *His Request to Julia* (59).

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“candour” of her teeth, the perfumes she exhales and the clothes she wears; but when we try to form a conception of her as a real woman we fail. There are, too, strange inconsistencies in what the poet tells us of her. Often enough she appears as a light o’ love, and is addressed in language which is grossly sensual; but in the curious poem, *Julia’s Churching, or Purification* (898), she comes before us as a chaste matron, making her way to church with her monthly nurse! But what strikes us most in the love-poems to Julia and her rivals is the complete absence of anything like incident or drama. There is no development in the poet’s amours, no inrush of hot jealousy, no satiety, no quarrelling, no reconciliation. The poet, in spite of his fourteen mistresses, has no rivals who seek to rob him of his love. We have, indeed, only to compare, in this respect, Herrick’s mistress-poems with those of other poets in whose case we know that the love and the loved ones are real, in order to appreciate this difference. Catullus’s love for Lesbia can be traced exactly through its different stages—passionate yearning, full fruition, disillusionment and jealousy, ending in bitter loathing—and something like this dramatic development is found in some of the love-poetry of Elizabethan poets—for instance, in the love-elegies of Donne. Is it not, too, the presence of this dramatic development which

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makes the love-story of Shakespeare's Sonnets seem so real? But of all this there is nothing in the *Hesperides*. The poet loves and is loved. His placid, passionless mistresses accept his gallant advances in silence and appear to him in his dreams; they fall sick and recover; they object to his grey hairs, but crown his head with roses; they find him growing old and infirm, but love him none the less. And all this applies to Julia just as much as to any of the other mistresses. He entreats her to close his eyes when death overtakes him, and follow him with tears to the grave; but he asks Perilla to perform the same service for him, and forgets that the presence of two such rivals at a clergyman's bedside and tomb might be a cause of scandal.

Again, do not these fanciful classical names of Herrick's mistresses, when set over against the real names of Elizabeth Wheeler, Dorothy Keneday, and Amy Potter, to whom also the poet protests his love, suggest the fictitious character of those who bear them? We have no reason to doubt the genuineness of his affection for the latter, though its ardour does not seem to have been lasting. There is, indeed, a fervour in the poem entitled *His Parting from Mistress Dorothy Keneday* (122), which is rarely met with in the verses addressed to Julia.

I cannot follow Mr Gosse in his statement that the poems to Julia belong exclusively to the

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period before the poet's ordination. I believe, on the contrary, that they extend over the whole period of his manhood up to 1648, and that some of them—for instance, *His Charge to Julia at his Death* (627)—were probably written not long before the publication of *Hesperides*. Still less can I agree with him in thinking that Julia was the mother of the girl addressed in *His Daughter's Dowry*.¹ There is absolutely no statement to this effect in the poem itself, and, knowing as we do the poet's love of make-believe, we have a right to question the very existence of this supposed daughter. The poem is not included in the *Hesperides*, but has been introduced by modern editors into the collective works of Herrick from Ashmole MS. 38, in the Bodleian.¹ It bears at the close of it the poet's signature—“Robt. Hericke,” and its style, above all the prevalence of run-on verses, suggests that it is of early date. In casting doubt upon the reality of this daughter, it must be remembered how fond the poet was of setting up lay-figures in order to clothe them with the draperies of his abundant fancy. Among the *Hesperides* is a poem entitled *The Parting Verse, or Charge to his Supposed Wife when he Travelled* (465), in which he sets forth in detail the course of life which this lady is to follow during his absence. From first to last the poem is a tissue of pure fantasy.

¹ See Pollard ii. 260.

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There seems to be, therefore, no sufficient reason for supposing that Julia had any more real existence than Corinna, Anthea, or any of the other classically named mistresses to whom the poet makes love. And Herrick, if I read him aright, comes very near to making on one occasion a confession of the counterfeit nature of the poems addressed to her and her rivals :

TO HIS BOOK (194).

Like to a bride, come forth, my book, at last,
With all thy richest jewels overcast ;
Say, if there be, 'mongst many gems here, one
Deserveless of the name of paragon :
Blush not for that, for we have set
Some pearls on queens that have been counterfeit.

We have tarried long over the poet's mistresses, and it is time to hasten on. The *Hesperides* poems make it clear that, in addition to men of letters and musicians, Herrick also numbered amongst his friends certain country knights, courtiers and court-officials ; that prominent members of the nobility were his patrons, and that some of his lyrics were sung in the royal presence at Whitehall. The poem entitled *A New Year's Gift to Sir Simon Steward* (319), was probably written in the December of 1623 ;¹ it is a poetical epistle, apparently written from somewhere in the country to Sir Simon

¹ See Pollard's Note to this poem.

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who is in town. The poet, instead of sending his friend political news and discussion of state policy, informs him of

Winter's tales and mirth,
That milkmaids make about the hearth—

of Christmas sports and Twelfth-tide feasts, and all the other festivities which belong to a Yuletide in the country. At the same time, he is anxious that he shall not be forgotten by his London friends in his absence.

Another associate of these years was Sir Lewis Pemberton, a Northamptonshire knight, with a seat at Rushden in that county. Herrick seems to have paid a visit to this country house and gives us in his *Panegyric to Sir Lewis Pemberton* (377) a glowing picture of the hospitable board of a country knight in the seventeenth century. The contemporary character-writers, who draw their bows at a venture, are fond of ridiculing the country gentleman “whose travel is seldom farther than the next market-town,” who is awkward and out of place in town, and “must home again, being like a dor that ends his flight in a dunghill.”¹ But Herrick, while glancing at the churlishness of certain members of the class, pays a warm tribute to the hospitality and inborn kindness of Sir Lewis.

¹ Sir Thomas Overbury's *Characters*: “The Country Gentleman.”

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Of Herrick's friends at Court notice may first of all be taken of Edward Norgate, Clerk of the Signet to Charles I., John Crofts, Cupbearer to the King, and Sir John Mennes, the Commander of the Navy, and a minor poet of some fame in his day. To each of these Herrick addresses verses.

Reference has already been made to the noblemen and Court favourites whom Herrick reckoned among his patrons—Philip, Earl of Pembroke, Mildmay Fane, Earl of Westmorland, Robert Pierrepont, Viscount Newark, and Mr Endymion Porter, Groom of His Majesty's Bedchamber. Of these the most important was the last, who seems to have been to Herrick what the impecunious undergraduate had vainly desired his uncle, Sir William, to be—"a true Maecenas." Porter was, after Buckingham, one of the most influential of the King's courtiers. Born in 1587, he had been educated in Spain, and had served for a time in the household of Olivares. Returning to England, he had entered the service of the royal favourite, Buckingham, and his fortunes had advanced concurrently with those of his master. Through Buckingham's influence he was made Gentleman of the King's Bedchamber about 1620, and when the Spanish marriage scheme was afoot, his knowledge of Spain led to his being sent thither in 1622 to prepare for the arrival of the princely wooer.

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He returned to England, but in the following year accompanied Prince Charles and Buckingham to Madrid. After the new king's accession, Endymion Porter attained to still higher power and influence. The State Papers have much to relate of the part he took in the affairs of Court and State, and of the princely gifts bestowed upon him by the King. In later years he shared in the misfortunes of his party. After sitting in the Long Parliament as member for Droitwich, he was expelled from that body in 1643 on account of his supposed connection with a popish plot. A little later we find him with Queen Henrietta in Holland; shortly before the King's death he returned to England, and is supposed to have died obscurely at London in the August of 1649.¹

It was Porter's ambition, when in the heyday of his fortune, to shine as the patron of men of letters. To him Dekker dedicated his *Dream* in the year 1620, and Davenant his play, *The Wits*, in 1634. Thomas May, Edmund Bolton and Gervase Warmestry were amongst his friends, and the last-named, dedicating to him his *England's Wound and its Cure* in 1628, speaks of him as beloved by two kings: “by James for

¹ See State Papers, Domestic, of the reigns of James I. and Charles I., *passim*, and Dorothea Townshend, *The Life and Letters of Endymion Porter*; also E. B. de Fonblanque, *Lives of the Lords Strangford*.

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his admirable wit, and by Charles for his general learning, brave style, sweet temper, great experience, travels and modern languages." That, in addition to these qualities, he was an accomplished connoisseur is attested by the fact that he was one of the agents employed by Charles I. in forming his famous collection of pictures.

The friendship between Porter and Herrick seems to have been close and honourable. There is no trace of servility in the poet's reference to the wealthy patron at whose porch he finds a "state of poets" attending upon him.¹ He confesses that Porter has given him "the oil of maintenance," just as Horace owns the gift of the Sabine farm from Maecenas, but in acknowledging this bounty, he neither flatters nor fawns. The most beautiful of the poems that bring Porter before us is the *Eclogue, or Pastoral between Endymion Porter and Lycidas Herrick* (492), which is written in the lightest and most graceful manner of the Spenserian school. In it the poet declares himself jealous of the time which his patron and friend is spending at Court, and entreats him to leave those pleasures and distractions for Latmos and the society of Florabell, handsome-handed Drosomell, and dainty Amaryllis.

The mention of Endymion Porter brings us back to Herrick's earlier friend, John Weekes,

¹ See *To the Honoured Master, Endymion Porter* (1071).

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sometime Fellow of St John's College, Cambridge. It is uncertain which of the two men left the University first, but it is probable that they spent some years in London together, and met under Porter's roof. Weekes was for some time Porter's chaplain, and it is possible that it was Herrick who obtained for him this congenial post. In a letter to Porter,¹ dated July 5, 1629, Weekes addresses him as “My deare Patrone;” and in a second letter, written on October 3, 1633, when Weekes, like Herrick, was a parson in Devonshire, he subscribes himself, “Your epicene chaplaine, both hee and shee, Joh. Weekes and littel b.” The jest which lurks in the words “epicene” and “littel b” is lost to us now, but the tone of the letter enables us to see in Weekes the humourist whose reputation for joviality is recorded by Anthony à Wood.

It was probably through the instrumentality of Porter that Herrick came under the notice of Porter's patrons, the Duke of Buckingham and the King. It has been suggested by Mr Carew Hazlitt that the poet “had some employment of a subordinate character at the chapel in Whitehall, and we should assign to this period and circumstance the composition of those pieces among the *Noble Numbers* which bear a relation to that institution.”² The pieces in question

¹ See *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic*, 1629-1631, p. 5.

² Introduction to Herrick's Works, p. xv.

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are the *Christmas Carols* and *Songs for the Circumcision*, which are described as “sung before the King, in the Presence at Whitehall.” Mr Hazlitt’s theory also receives some support from the words of the following distich in the *Noble Numbers* (62):—

GOD AND THE KING

How am I bound to two ! God, who doth give
The mind ; the King, the means whereby I live.

On the other hand, it may be argued that if Herrick had held a post at court, we might expect to find some reference to it, and some mention of the salary paid to him, among the State Papers of the period. We meet with frequent references of this character in the case of Lanieri, Ramsay, William and Henry Lawes, and “other gentlemen of the chapel,” but there is nowhere any mention of Herrick. But whatever be the relationship in which the poet stood to the court, it is certain that Charles was acquainted with him and his verses, and that some of his lyrics, including poems of a secular as well as of a sacred nature, were sung to him, after being set to music by the royal musicians. Nor did Herrick allow himself to be entirely forgotten by his monarch when residence in his Devonshire parish severed him from the court. He celebrated the births of the princes, Charles and James, in 1630 and 1633

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respectively, addressed verses to the king during the civil wars, and welcomed him with a song when, in 1647, he came to reside, under the protection of Cromwell's army, in the royal palace at Hampton Court.

In the list of Herrick's patrons must also be placed the powerful Duke of Buckingham, though the verses addressed *To the high and noble Prince George, Duke, Marquis, and Earl of Buckingham* (245) show reverent regard rather than intimacy.¹ But for some months of the year 1627 it was the poet's lot to spend much time in the duke's company. Early in that year the king had decided to send an expedition to the Isle of Rhé in defence of the French Huguenots, and to Buckingham had been entrusted the leadership. Encountering numerous difficulties, the ill-starred expedition did not set out until June 27, when some hundred sail, carrying six thousand foot and a hundred horse, left Stokes Bay for the French island. Herrick, who was now probably entrusting his fortunes to the waves for the first time in his life, seems to have regarded the step he was taking with some concern, and we are probably right in ascribing to this occasion the composition of the poems, *His Sailing from Julia* (35), *The Parting Verse, or Charge to his Supposed Wife when he Travelled*

¹ Some time after Buckingham's death in 1628, he addresses a poem to the duke's niece, the Lady Mary Villiers; see No. 341.

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(465), and, perhaps, his *Short Hymn to Neptune* (325). The first of these reads as follows :—

When that day comes, whose evening says I'm gone
Unto that watery desolation,
Devoutly to thy closet-gods then pray
That my wing'd ship may meet no remora.¹
Those deities which circum-walk the seas,
And look upon our dreadful passages,
Will from all dangers re-deliver me
For one drink-offering poured out by thee.
Mercy and truth live with thee ! and forbear,
In my short absence, to unsluice a tear ;
But yet for love's sake let thy lips do this,
Give my dead picture one engendering kiss :
Work that to life, and let me ever dwell
In thy remembrance, Julia. So, farewell.

In other poems he begs his supposed wife to be a Penelope in his absence from her, and promises that if "the great blue ruler of the seas" will prove propitious, he will return before many "full-faced moons shall wane." To Neptune he promises a tunny-fish as thank-offering, if he will speed him safely to his destination.

The various English and French accounts of the ill-fated expedition to the Isle of Rhé which I have seen make no mention of the duke's chaplain. On the French side we hear much of the "vrais dogues d'Angleterre qui dévorent leurs semblables," and of their leader "Bouquincan"

¹ "Remora, the sea lamprey, or suckstone, believed to check the course of ships by clinging to their keels" (Pollard).

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whose name the Gallic wit of the besieged soldiers anagrammatises into “coquin bani.”¹ The English State Papers, and the late Professor S. R. Gardiner² furnish us with a detailed account of the siege, of the shortage in men and troops, of the delay in sending reinforcements, and of the ignominious return of the English fleet in the following November. The duke’s chaplain doubtless saw a good deal of the military operations, and if the poem entitled *A Vow to Mars* (386) is to be regarded seriously, actually took part in them on one occasion.

Herrick’s military chaplaincy indicates that, in the year 1627 at the latest, he had finally decided to enter the service of the Church. On his return from the Isle of Rhé—“or, as some call it, the Isle of Rue, for the bitter success we had there”³—he was within measurable distance of his “banishment” to the “loathed West,” but before we follow him there, it will be well to form a conception of his personality during these years of London life. The naïve self-portraiture of Herrick in his verses atones to some extent for the meagreness of external evidence as to his life and character. Those verses help us to follow the poet along his primrose path of dalli-

¹ See “Lettre du Baron de Saint Surin à un sien amy dans l’armée du Roy. Ecrite de la Citadelle S. Martin de Ré ce 10 Septembre (1627).”

² *History of England*, 1603-1642, vol. vi. p. 167.

³ Howell, *Familiar Letters*, ed. Jacobs, I. 250.

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ance, enjoying to the full the pleasures of London society, and taking no thought for the morrow :

I fear no earthly powers,
But care for crowns of flowers ;
And love to have my beard
With wine and oil besmeared.
This day I'll drown all sorrow ;
Who knows to live to-morrow ? ¹

This is the cry of the anacreontic lyrist all the world over, and in Herrick's case, at least, there is no reason to doubt that, during these London years, the sentiment was genuine and spontaneous. The same thoughts and feelings recur in the ode entitled "His Age, dedicated to his peculiar friend, Mr John Wickes (Weekes), under the name of Posthumus" (336). Here there is wistful regret for the years that are no more, and a foreboding that worse times are to follow ; but the poet refuses to give way to gloomy thoughts, and, so far from experiencing sorrow's crown of sorrow, feasts rapturously on past memories, washed down with copious draughts of "brave Burgundian wine" :

Crown we our heads with roses then,
And 'noint with Tyrian balm ; for when
We two are dead,
The world with us is buried.

¹ No. 170.

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Then live we free
As is the air, and let us be
Our own fair wind, and mark each one
Day with the white and lucky stone.

As a picture of the poet's manner of life at the time when it was written, and of the golden days that had gone before, the poem is of great value. It is the Herrick of the taverns that is revealed, the “music of a feast,” whose lyrics win the applause of Jonson himself and of every other member of the tribe. Elsewhere he stands before us as the squire of dames; he is many times entertained by “the most virtuous Mistress Pot,” and, as is his wont, rewards her with a poem and a declaration that she is the “lamp eternal to my poetry”;¹ to another of his ladies he sends not only a string of verses but also “a pipkin of jelly,” which inspires the verses.² His mistress-poems are full of all sorts of gallantry, and, as the verses to the Countess of Carlisle (169)—the heroine of Browning's *Strafford*—show, he could pay a compliment to a high-born noblewoman with the fine grace of the consummate cavalier:

I saw about her spotless wrist
Of blackest silk, a curious twist,
Which, circumvolving gently, there
Enthrall'd her arm as prisoner.
Dark was the gaol, but as if light
Had met t' engender with the night;

¹ *To Mistress Pot* (226).

² *A Ternary of Littles* (733).

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Or so as darkness made a star,
To show at once both night and day.
One fancy more ! but if there be
Such freedom in captivity,
I beg of Love that ever I
May in like chains of darkness lie.¹

The year 1629 brought with it a great change in the poet's circumstances and manner of life. The essenced cavalier, the sealed member of the tribe of Ben, became the country parson, and exchanged the gay society of London and the Court for a vicarage and ninety-three acres of glebe. Late in the summer of that year he lost his mother, who had been spending the last years of her life in the comfortable home of her daughter, Mercy Wingfield, at Brantham in Suffolk. Of the poet's relations with her we know nothing, and speculation on such a matter is particularly undesirable. She left him in her will a ring of the value of twenty shillings, a like gift being made to her son Nicholas and her daughter-in-law, the wife of William Herrick. To her son Thomas, whose financial difficulties as a farmer have already been mentioned, she left nothing ; he may have died before 1629. She bequeathed £100 to her son William, but most of her property went to the daughter in whose house she died. Her various legacies to

¹ *Upon a black twist rounding the arm of the Countess of Carlisle* (169).

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friends and servants, and to the poor of Brantham, show that she was possessed of fairly ample means at the time of her death.¹

Very soon after his mother's funeral, Herrick set out for Devonshire. A docquet, preserved among the domestic series of State Papers in the Public Record Office, and endorsed September 30, 1629, furnishes us with the following information :—

“ A presentaçon to the vicarige of Deane-Prior in the dioces of Exeter for Robert Hearick, Clerke, and M^r of Arts, the same being void by the promoçon of the last Incumbent to the Bishoprick of Carlile. Subsc^r upon significaçon of his Ma^{ty}s pleasure by the Lord Viscount Dorchester, and procured by his Lo^p.

p. GALL.”

The living of Dean Prior was in the hands of Sir Edward Giles, the lord of the manor there, but as Dr Potter had been promoted to a bishopric, the right of presenting a successor reverted to the King ; the inference therefore is that Herrick owed his living to Charles. There was apparently some slight delay in the negotiations, for among the State Papers we meet with the following, which is in Herrick's own neat handwriting, and which furnishes us with the

¹ The will is transcribed *verbatim* in Grosart's *Memorial Introduction*, p. lxxxiv.

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valuable information as to the poet's service under Buckingham in the Isle of Rhé :—

“ To the Kinges most excellent Majesty : The humble petiçon of Robert Hericke, Chaplayne to the late Duke of Buckingham in the Isle of Reis. Whereas yt was yo^r Ma^{ty}s especiall favour to bestow on y^e petiçoer the vicaridge of Deane, by y^e remoovall of Doctor Potter to y^e B^{ppk} of Carlyle. It may now please yo^r most sacred Ma^{ty} (the Commendã granted to him by yo^r Ma^{ty} being expired this present Michas) that yo^r sov^aigne command may goe forth to the signature for the dispatch of the petiçoer, who shall ever pray for yo^r Ma^{ty}s longe and happie raigne.

—Cœtera mando Deo.”

A further confirmation of Herrick's appointment to the Devonshire living is found in the nineteenth volume of Rymer's *Fœdera* where, in a list of preferments for the year 1629, we read :—

“ Robertus Hearick, Clericus, A.M., habet consimiles Literas Patentes de presentatione ad Vicariam de Deane Prior, Diocesis Exoniensis, jam legitime et de jure vacantem.”

If one of Herrick's poems is to be believed—and there is in it an accent of sincerity and real

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emotion which is rarely met with elsewhere—it is manifest that he realised to the full the seriousness of the step which he was now taking, and the lofty duties of the services to which he was dedicating his life and his powers. It was one thing to be chaplain to the Duke of Buckingham; another, and a very different thing, to be the spiritual guide and pastor of a village community. In the Ashmole MS. 38, which contains several of Herrick's poems, is a copy of verses entitled *Mr Robert Herrick: His Farewell unto Poetry*,¹ and it was Dr Grosart who first pointed out the importance of these verses in their bearing on the poet's life and character, and drew attention to the fact that they were written when he was leaving London for Dean Prior. Some of the verses of this poem have already been quoted (see p. 59) as evidence of the poet's freedom from poverty during his London years; but it behoves us now to consider the poem as a whole more closely. The underlying idea of it is that Herrick feels it his duty, now that he is taking upon him the cure of souls, to bid farewell to poetry, save only in as far as it can be applied to the noble numbers of sacred song. The parting is hard, for the muse of poetry has been the yoke-fellow of his life, filling him with rapture and mystic frenzy:—

¹ There is another copy of the same poem, with a few variants, in the British Museum, Add. MS. 22, 603.

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Even such are we, and in our parting do
No otherwise than as those former two
Natures like ours ; we who have spent our time
Both from the morning to the evening chime,
Nay, till the bellman of the night had tolled
Past noon of night—yet were the hours not old
Nor dulled with iron sleep—but have outworn
The fresh and fairest flourish of the morn
With flame and rapture ; drinking to the odd
Number of nine, which makes us full with God.
And in that mystic frenzy we have hurled,
As with a tempest, nature through the world,
And in a whirlwind twirl'd her home, aghast
At that which in her ecstasy had passed ;
Thus crowned with rosebuds, sack, thou mad'st me fly,
Like fire-drakes, yet didst me no harm thereby.¹

But now he turns from poetry and bids her be hoarse to him. The God of Nature is now shaping his powers for more glorious ends, and he is entering a higher sphere of service than that of the muses of Helicon. He casts upon his mistress the wistful eyes of Orpheus as he turned to look upon his Eurydice, or those of Demosthenes and Cicero as they fixed their gaze upon the fatherland from which they were banished ; and then, with tears starting from his eyes, bids her farewell :—

Then part in name of peace, and softly on
With numerous¹ feet to hoofy Helicon ;

¹ Poems not included in *Hesperides* ; Pollard ii. 264.

² Numerous = moving in rhythmic numbers.

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And when thou art upon that forked hill
Amongst the thrice three sacred virgins, fill
A full-brimm'd bowl of fury and of rage,
And quaff it to the poets of our age . . .
Thus with a kiss of warmth and love I part,
Not so, but that some relic in my heart
Shall stand for ever, though I do address
Chiefly myself to what I must profess.
Know yet, rare soul, when my diviner muse
Shall want a handmaid, as she oft will use,
Be ready, thou for me, to wait upon her,
Though as a servant, yet a maid of honour.
The crown of duty is our duty : well
Doing's the fruit of doing well. Farewell.

CHAPTER IV

DEAN PRIOR

DEAN PRIOR, to which Herrick was "banished" in the autumn of 1629, is a parish of about four thousand acres, situated on the south-eastern slopes of Dartmoor. The high-road from Exeter to Plymouth passes through the scattered village, and within a five miles' radius of Herrick's church lie the ancient townships of Totnes and Ashburton. Modern civilisation, as represented by railways and factories, has laid the lightest of fingers upon Dean Prior, and to this day the village, though somewhat shrunk in size and importance, presents to the visitor very much the same appearance that it did to Herrick on his arrival there in 1629. Many of the cottages still retain their thatched roofs and penthouses, their open hearths and massive chimneys; and though the manor-houses have been shorn of much of their former splendour, they have at any rate been spared the hand of the modern renovator. Age, so far from withering their pristine beauty, has enhanced it by the mellowed colours of stone and woodwork. Ivy, roses, and



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Dean Prior

honeysuckle creep over the cottages, and the little roadside gardens are still gay with the flowers which we meet with in the *Hesperides*—daffodils, primroses, violets, and wallflowers, the crimson pæony, and the stately white lily. In the valley are water-meadows, each meadow irrigated in the characteristic Devonian manner by “leats” which bring fertility from the Dartmoor streams; and above these, climbing upwards towards the heather moors, are the cornfields, the bright red earth of which glows in the early spring sunshine.

But the chief beauty of the village lies in its apple orchards, which creep close to the church and the cottages and follow the devious windings of Dean Burn. For six months of the year the trees are grey with ragged lichen, but in the first warm days of May, the greyness is hidden beneath sheets of rosy “blooth,” to be followed, as spring and summer merge into autumn, by clusters of golden fruit. There is no more characteristic feature of the combes of South Devon than these apple orchards, and they must at the same time have recalled to Herrick’s mind the

uda

Mobilibus pomaria rivis

of Horace’s Tibur, and thus have led him to compare his Devonshire glebe with the Sabine farm of the famous Roman lyrist.

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Dean Burn, to which Herrick has given enduring obloquy, is a typical Dartmoor stream. Taking its rise on the moors to the west of the village, it makes its way first of all through a rocky gorge where buzzard and carrion crow find a resting place, only to lose itself later among thick coppices of scrub-oak and hazel. Even when the combe widens and the waters of the burn grow more placid, it still preserves something of its "warty incivility":

Thy rocky bottom, that doth tear thy streams
And makes them frantic even to all extremes,
To my content I never should behold,
Were thy streams silver, or thy rocks all gold? ¹

The stream divides the parish of Dean Prior from that of Buckfastleigh, and at last pours its waters into those of the Dart, not far from the walls of the old Cistercian abbey of Buckfast.

The background to this picture of cornfields and watered meadows, orchards and woodlands, is formed by great stretches of moorland, the soft contours of which are now and again broken by rugged granite tors. As one stands in Dean Prior churchyard, and looks northward across the valley of the Dart, a wide stretch of this moorland scenery skirts the horizon and adds an element of grandeur and vastness to the idyllic beauty which lies at one's feet. But for

¹ *To Dean Burn* (86).

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the glories of Dartmoor Herrick cared as little as that other Devonshire poet of the seventeenth century, William Browne, who, with all his love for the rich scenery of the Tavy valley, was content to leave the adjoining moorlands unsung.

The church and parsonage of Dean Prior now stand close to the high-road, but in the seventeenth century the road passed nearer to the moors, and the church was reached by a lane between high hedgerows. Herrick's church is a somewhat spacious building, chiefly in the Perpendicular style, with nave, north and south aisles, and a western battlemented tower. The vicarage has been altered and enlarged, but some of the older parts of the building, now used as offices, are probably not later in date than the seventeenth century, and may well have been the parlour, hall, kitchen, and buttery for which the poet offers his hymn of thanksgiving to God.

Herrick's parishioners were doubtless to a large extent husbandmen, engaged in the cultivation of corn and fruit, and in the rearing of cattle and sheep. Some of them, however, were probably occupied in the weaving trade, which the monks of Buckfast had introduced into the Dart valley centuries before, and which to this day remains one of the staple industries of the district. The village of Dean still preserves a tradition of a weaver whose ghost used to appear

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at his loom until laid to rest by the vicar, and Westcote, in his *View of Devonshire*, published in 1630, makes special mention of a coarse cloth, called narrow-pin-whites, which was produced in the neighbourhood of Totnes. The population of the village in 1901 was 259, but the church register gives evidence that it was somewhat larger in the seventeenth century.

The lord of the manor of Dean, and Herrick's most distinguished parishioner, was Sir Edward Giles, who lived at Dean Court, within half a mile of the church and vicarage. In 1629 the knight was about fifty years of age and a man of standing in the county. In his youth he had travelled, and fought for queen and country in the Netherlands; returning to England in 1603, he had been knighted by James I., and after his father's death, he had, in the words of Prince, "the whole power of the county put into his hands."¹ He represented Totnes Borough in several of the parliaments of James I. and Charles I. Connected by marriage with Sir Edward Giles, were the families of Yard, Lowman, and Northleigh, members of which were settled at Dean Prior in Herrick's time, and are celebrated by him in his poems.

Of Herrick's manner of life at Dean Prior, and of his relationships with his parishioners, we learn a good deal from the *Hesperides* and

¹ *Worthies of Devon*, p. 422.

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Noble Numbers ; but it is not easy to determine exactly how far he appreciated his Devonshire home, and how far it seemed to him a place of bitter exile. In considering this matter, it is important to remember that he was a poet of moods, and that in a period of eighteen years (1629-1647) spent at Dean Prior, he experienced many moods and regarded his life there in different ways. We have already seen with what "sublim'd respect and conscience unto priesthood" he entered upon his holy calling ; we have now to consider the character of his life as vicar. Scattered through the *Hesperides* are some six poems which express with clearest utterance his "discontents in Devonshire." There is first of all his poem *To Dean Burn* (86), whose bed, he declares, is as rocky as the hearts of the men who live by it—

A people currish, churlish as the seas,
And rude almost as rudest savages.

Following upon this, is the poem *To his Household Gods* (278), which ends with the stinging couplet—

Search worlds of ice, and rather there
Dwell than in loathed Devonshire.

Similar repugnance is expressed in the lines *Upon Himself* (456), and *His Return to London* (713), in which he welcomes, with something like

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rapture, the change of fortune which led to his departure from his country vicarage.

The loathing for the West Country which these poems express is uncompromising enough. Were we forced to form a judgment on these alone, it would be possible to compare Herrick's exile at Dean Prior with that of Ovid at Tomi. But if we look at them more closely, we see that, instead of being spread over the whole of the poet's life in Devonshire, they all belong to about the year 1647, the year of his ejection from Dean Prior. Now we do not know with any certainty to what extent the poet's parishioners sympathised with the Puritan party during the years of the Civil War, or with what feelings they regarded the dismissal of their vicar and the induction of his Puritan successor, John Syms. But we can realise that in Dean Prior, as throughout the country, those years of strife must have sorely tried the better feelings of many an English home. It was a time when household was divided against household and village against village, when homes were ruined and precious blood shed in the defence of creed and party. At such a time, too, the village parson, so far from being able to allay the strife, must himself have been the very centre of the feud, and the butt of insult and calumny. Herrick could not have escaped from all this, and the bitterness of his feelings finds

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utterance in his verse. At such a time, and amid such surroundings, the memory of the old London life stirred strange yearnings within him; the paternal country where much of his youth and early manhood had been spent called him with persistent summons, and when at last the release came, it was welcomed with rapture. Yet it is evident from one short poem that this feeling of rapture was tempered even at the time by a sense of regret. His parishioners may have grown churlish and currish, but the vicarage with its associations was still dear to him :

TO LAR (333)

No more shall I, since I am driven hence,
Devote to thee my grains of frankincense ;
No more shall I from mantle-trees hang down,
To honour thee, my little parsley crown ;
No more shall I (I fear me) to thee bring
My chives of garlic for an offering ;
No more shall I from henceforth hear a choir
Of merry crickets by my country fire.
Go where I will, thou lucky Lar stay here,
Warm by a glitt'ring chimney all the year.

There remain for consideration two other poems in which Herrick expresses his dislike to Devonshire, and in which there is no indication that they were written at the time of his ejection. These are *His Lachrymae* (371) and *Discontents in Devon* (51). The former is written in a mood of deep dejection :

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Call me no more,
As heretofore,
The music of a feast ;
Since now, alas !
The mirth that was
In me is dead or ceas'd.

Before I went
To banishment
Into the loathed West,
I could rehearse
A lyric verse,
And speak it with the best.

But time, ay me !
Has laid, I see,
My organ fast asleep ;
And tuned my voice
Into the noise
Of them that sit and weep.

If we did not know that Herrick was here giving utterance to a passing mood of despondency, we might assume that his muse entirely deserted him in Devonshire ; we have, of course, abundant evidence that this was not the case, and we need only turn to the *Discontents in Devon* to find such an assumption plainly falsified :

More discontents I never had
Since I was born than here,
Where I have been, and still am sad,
In this dull Devonshire ;
Yet, justly too, I must confess
I ne'er invented such
Ennobled numbers for the press,
Than where I loathed so much.

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What, then, do Herrick's strictures on Devonshire and Dean Prior amount to? They show plainly enough that during the last months—perhaps, the last years—of his residence there, he found his surroundings often distasteful and his parishioners churlish and insolent; they show, too, that at other times he experienced moods of despondency in which his present life stood out in drab contrast to the glittering shows of earlier days. There must, indeed, have been many occasions when the poet in his lonely vicarage longed for the song and festive cheer of the Apollo Chamber, the society of courtier friends and the fleshpots of Whitehall, and on a few of these occasions the sense of what he has lost moves him to elegiac lament, or to malediction. But to suppose that this was a prevailing state of mind, and that the whole of his eighteen years' residence in Devonshire was merely a time of bitter exile, is a distortion of the statements recorded by Herrick himself in his poems. Over against such verses as those *To Dean Burn* or *Discontents in Devon*, may be set *His Content in the Country* (552) which belongs to the Dean Prior period and bears witness to the quiet joy which he and his housekeeper, Prudence Baldwin, experienced in the country vicarage. What is uppermost in his mind at the time when he wrote these verses is a pleasant sense of independence and freedom from

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care. It was a much more frugal life than that which he had spent in London at the tables of the rich ; but he had come to realise that frugality, combined with independence, was better than luxury supported by the "oil of maintenance," bestowed upon him by wealthy patrons. Another poem, conceived in the same spirit of simple contentment, and entitled *His Grange, or Private Wealth* (724), brings the poet's Devonshire life before us with singular vividness and charm :

Though clock,
To tell how night draws hence, I've none,
A cock
I have to sing how day draws on.
I have
A maid, my Prew, by good luck sent
To save
That little Fates me gave or lent.
A hen
I keep, which creaking day by day,
Tells when
She goes her long white egg to lay.
A goose
I have, which with a jealous ear
Lets loose
Her tongue to tell that danger's near.
A lamb
I keep, tame, with my morsels fed,
Whose dam
An orphan left him, lately dead.
A cat
I keep that plays about my house,
Grown fat
With eating many a miching mouse. —

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To these
A Tracy¹ I do keep whereby
I please
The more my rural privacy ;
Which are
But toys to give my heart some ease ;
Where care
None is, slight things do lightly please.

But the poem which brings the Devonshire parson most clearly before us is one contained in the *Noble Numbers*, and entitled *A Thanksgiving to God for his House* (47). It is too long, and perhaps too familiar, to quote, but some reference to it may be made, if only to show how completely it refutes the idea that its author was habitually discontented with his surroundings. We see the parson seated in the chimney-corner of his "cell," eating his beloved beet and drinking his spiced wassail bowls, while Prue Baldwin is in the dairy making Devonshire cream. Or we follow him to his acres of glebe, where the cornfields are ripe to harvest, and the pastures well stocked with the red Devon cattle. The gratitude of the parish priest is chiefly for "creature comforts," and the picture which he paints would have better pleased the Sabine Horace than Herrick's contemporary, the author of *The Priest to the Temple*. Yet we are made aware of the parson's simple generosity, and we

¹ Tracy is the name of his spaniel, as the poet himself informs us in a note to the original edition of *Hesperides*.

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see the threshold of his house worn away by the footsteps of the poor.

When we attempt to realise the sharp contrast which his manner of life at Dean Prior presented to that of the London years which preceded it, our surprise is not that Herrick sometimes gave voice to feelings of discontent and to wistful yearnings after what had passed away, but that he should, on the whole, have adapted himself so well to the new conditions. That he did so is due in no small measure to the pliancy of his temper and the breadth of his tastes and sympathies. His finely sensuous nature responded to varying, nay, conflicting appeals. He is alike the poet of the town and the country, of the Court and the cottage. He delights in the artificial graces, the studied refinements, the culture and gallantry of the town, but also in village customs and superstitions, and the simple pleasures of rustic life. He sings "of balm, of oil, of spice and ambergris," but also "of May-poles, hock-carts, wassails, wakes"; he can take delight in the riband that supports Julia's petticoat and the odours of "camphire, storax, spikenard, galbanum" that are breathed forth when she unlaces herself, but also in the colour and grace of the daffodil and the perfume of the violet. Settled in his Devonshire home, the Anacreon of the Devil Tavern, the courtier-lyrist, the poet of perfumes

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and millinery, seeks amid his new surroundings new themes for poetic handling, and finds them close at hand in the rustic sports, junketings and superstitions of his parishioners.

It is impossible to determine the dates at which Herrick's poems on May-poles, hock-carts, wassails, and wakes were written, but it is only natural to assume that the majority of them belong to the Dean Prior period. And if his taste for these things was already developed before he reached the west country, it is doubtful whether he could have been "banished" to a more congenial neighbourhood. To this day Dartmoor and the villages that skirt it are richer in folk and fairy lore, and more tenacious of old-world customs, superstitions, and ceremonies, than almost any other district in England. Dartmoor farmers still declare themselves pixy-led when they lose their way on the moor in returning from market, and until quite recently the wassailing of apple-trees by means of shot, fired into the branches on Twelfth Night,¹ and the custom of passing young children suffering from rupture through the split trunk of a young ash-tree, were everywhere in vogue. Herrick's fairy-poems are based rather on literary models.

¹ For a reference to this custom see the *Twenty-second Report of the Committee on Devonshire Folk-lore*, edited by P. F. S. Amery, 1905. For an interesting account of Devonshire folk-lore of a hundred years ago, see Mrs Bray's *Description of the part of Devonshire bordering on the Tamar and the Tavy*.

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than on popular local legend ; there is no mention in them of the Dartmoor pixies, and, as we shall see later, they were probably written before he set foot in Devonshire ; but his folk-lore poems, his charms and his descriptions of rustic ceremonies have, in part at least, a distinct local colour, and were probably written at Dean Prior.

It is not easy to determine exactly the kind of relationship which existed between Herrick and his parishioners. Certain of the *Hesperides* poems indicate that he stood on good terms with the gentlefolks of his parish, and that his muse was at their service on more than one occasion. But references to the humbler villagers, and a few stinging epigrams written at the expense of some of them, give, if taken alone, the impression that he found the Devonshire peasant rude and boorish. As a matter of fact, however, the scurrilous epigrams which can be definitely connected with his parishioners are few in number. A search through the Dean Prior register shows that the unsavoury epigrams on Scobble, Mudge, Dundridge and Coone were probably hurled at parishioners, but that these are all. On the other side we have the assured fact that some of his poems became the treasured possessions of the parish, and that during the long years when his name was entirely forgotten by the cultured society of London, it was still held in esteem in the Devonshire village. Our evidence for this

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is to be found in the very remarkable account of a visit paid to Dean Prior in 1809 by Barron Field and published by him in the *Quarterly Review* (August, 1810). "Being in Devonshire during the last summer," writes Barron Field, "we took an opportunity of visiting Dean Prior, for the purpose of making some inquiries concerning Herrick, who, from the circumstance of having been vicar of that parish (where he is still talked of as a poet, a wit, and a hater of the county) for twenty years, might be supposed to have left some unrecorded memorials of his existence behind him.

"We found many persons in the village who could repeat some of his lines, and none who were not acquainted with his 'Farewell to Dean Bourn,' which, they said, he uttered as he crossed the brook, upon being ejected by Cromwell from the vicarage to which he had been presented by Charles I. 'But,' they added with a smile of innocent triumph, '*he did see it again*'; as was the fact, after the Restoration. . . .

"The person, however, who knows more of Herrick than all the rest of the neighbourhood, we found to be a poor woman in the ninety-ninth year of her age, named Dorothy King. She repeated to us, with great exactness, five of his *Noble Numbers*, among which was the beautiful Litany quoted above. These she had learnt from her mother, who was apprenticed to Herrick's

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successor in the vicarage. She called them her prayers, which, she said, she was in the habit of putting up in bed, whenever she could not sleep : and she therefore began the Litany at the second stanza,

When I lie within my bed, etc.

Another of her midnight orisons was the poem beginning

Every night thou dost me fright.

She had no idea that these poems had ever been printed, and could not have read them if she had seen them. She is in possession of few traditions as to the person, manners and habits of life of the poet ; but in return, she has a whole budget of anecdotes respecting his ghost ; and these she details with a careless but serene gravity, which one would not willingly discompose by any hints at a remote possibility of their not being exactly true. Herrick, she says, was a bachelor, and kept a maid-servant, as his poems, indeed, discover ; but she adds, what they do not discover, that he also kept a pet pig, which he taught to drink out of a tankard. And this important circumstance, together with a tradition that he one day threw his sermon at the congregation, with a curse for their inattention, forms almost the sum total of what we could collect of the poet's life." The statements of Dorothy King,

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and her ability to quote from the *Hesperides* and *Noble Numbers*, furnish us with a remarkable testimony to the interest which the Dean Prior villagers of the seventeenth century took in the poetry of their distinguished vicar. Of how many English poets can it be said that some of their poems have been handed down, for a period of a hundred and fifty years, by oral tradition, in the places where they lived? Such a record, as far as England is concerned, is almost unique, and it bears witness, as no other evidence could do, to the popularity which Herrick enjoyed amongst his parishioners.

There is one more piece of evidence as to the poet's celebrity in the county of his adoption. On the title-page of most of the extant copies of the original edition of Herrick's works stand the following words: "London. Printed for John Williams and Francis Eglesfield, and are to be sold at the Crown and Marygold in St Pauls Churchyard, 1648." But in some of the copies—that in the show-case at the British Museum is one of these—there occurs the following variant: "And are to be sold by Tho. Hunt, Bookseller in Exon." The meaning of this is that a certain number of the copies were sent direct from the printer's to the shop of the Exeter bookseller. Thomas Hunt knew well enough the popularity of Herrick as a local poet, and accordingly, without waiting for the arrival

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of the volumes in the usual way, he sent his order to the publishers before they had passed through the press, and thus secured the appearance of his name upon the title-page of the copies purchased by him. We have thus the twofold evidence of Herrick's celebrity as a poet both in his parish and in the county of Devon, during his lifetime and after his death.

The record of Herrick's life at Dean Prior, as far as it can be traced at all, is to be sought in his poems. Fortunately for us, the vow to abandon poetry, which he made when he took upon him the sacred duties of a parish priest and wrote his *Farewell to Poetry*, was not kept. Some of the choicest poems of the *Hesperides*, and probably most of the *Noble Numbers*, were written after 1629. It is, however, likely that the character of his poetry underwent a partial change when he left London—a change which is perhaps indicated by what he tells us in his *Lachrymae* (see page 100). In these Devon years the drinking songs and love songs, which had been inspired by his associations with Jonson at “the Sun, the Dog, the Triple Tun,” and which had won for him the proud title, “the music of a feast,” were probably fewer; the half-lyric and half-descriptive poems of country life more numerous.

In bidding farewell to London, Herrick determined not to let himself be forgotten either

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by the Court or his numerous city acquaintances. Reference has already been made to the poems in which he celebrates the birth of royal princes, and to these Dean Prior years also belong many of the verses addressed to his various patrons. The ode to Endymion Porter, *Upon his Brother's Death* (185), may be referred, with tolerable certainty, to the year 1637, when that courtier lost his brother, Captain Thomas Porter.¹ The verses to Mildmay Fane, Earl of Westmorland, also belong to this period (112);² he looks to Westmorland and to Robert Pierrepont, Viscount Newark, as the foster-fathers who shall protect his verses when their author is in his grave.

The year 1637, which saw the death of Captain Thomas Porter, is also the year in which a very near friend of the poet's died. Ben Jonson, who had been failing in health for some years, breathed his last on August 6th, and three days later he was buried in Westminster Abbey, with the words, "O rare Ben Jonson," inscribed on his

¹ *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic*, 1637, p. 435.

² Mildmay Fane did not become Earl of Westmorland until 1629, and in one or two of the poems to the earl, he is addressed as Westmorland, not only in the title, but in the poems themselves, *e.g.*,

When my date's done, and my grey hair must die,
Nurse up, great lord, this my posterity ;
Weak though it be, long may it grow and stand,
Shored up by you, brave Earl of Westmorland.

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tomb. The poems which Herrick wrote on the death of the great literary dictator have already been referred to (see page 62), and the sincerity of their utterance is a sufficient indication of the sense of loss which their author experienced when the father of the "tribe" had been for ever removed.

While death was robbing him of old friends of the London period, Herrick was forming new acquaintances in Devonshire. Among these were Sir Thomas Hele of Flete, whom he addresses in one of his poems as "his honoured friend," and Sir George Parry, who was Chancellor of the diocese of Exeter. Yet another poem is addressed to his bishop, the famous Joseph Hall, who in his youth had claimed to be the first of English satirists, the first

To tread the steps of perilous despite,

and in his old age had come under the flail of Milton's anti-prelatical pamphlets. It must also be remembered that an old friend with whom the poet had long stood on intimate terms was now residing in Devonshire, though in a remote corner of the shire. This was John Weekes, who had been appointed Vicar of Sherwell, near Barnstaple, about the same time that Herrick had gone to Dean Prior.

In the eyes of the Church, Weekes was a more important person than the vicar of Dean, for in

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1633, while still retaining his Devonshire living, he was elected to a prebend's stall in Bristol Cathedral; a little later he became a Doctor of Divinity and a Licenser of Printed Books, with authority to "gnaw out the choicest periods of exquisitest books, and to commit a treacherous fraud against the orphan remainders of worthiest men after death."

The tenor of the poet's life within his parish must have been, at least during his first years there, singularly uneventful; and probably the chief subjects which presented themselves for poetic treatment there were the rustic festivities of his parishioners. In the festooning of May-poles, the ceremonious home-bringing of the hock-cart, the Christmas wakes and mummings, and all the pagan ritual of Twelfth Night and Shrovetide, he must have taken a very keen interest, and endeared himself to the hearts of his parishioners by finding in such festivities the inspiration for matchless song. The simple annals of the parish are faithfully recorded by him in verse; and though he has left us no *Parish Register*, after the manner of Crabbe at Aldborough, he found, during his term of incumbency, events which made a demand upon his poetic genius. In 1637, Sir Edward Giles of Dean Court died. Herrick apparently wrote no poem on the knight's death, but after he had been followed to the grave by his wife, he

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honoured the dead lord and lady of the manor with the most beautiful of all his epitaphs, which the visitor to Dean Church may still read on the wall of the south aisle.

As Sir Edward Giles died childless, Dean Court passed, after his widow's death, into the hands of the Yarde family, who were related to the Giles' by marriage. Members of this family had long been residing at Dean Prior, as the parish register plainly shows. The Yardes, too, were distantly related to Herrick. The poet's first cousin, Tobias Herrick, rector of Market Harborough, and son of the poet's uncle, Robert Herrick of Leicester, married Elizabeth Yarde, who, like the Dean Prior Yardes, was descended from the Yardes of Bradley in Devonshire. When, therefore, on 5th September 1639, Lettice, the twenty-year-old daughter of Edward Yarde, was married in Herrick's church to Mr Henry Northleigh, or Northly, the poet, who had written epithalamiums in earlier days for other friends, was called upon to celebrate in like manner the wedding of his kinswoman in her own parish. In two short poems, *The Entertainment or Porch Verse* (313) and *The Good-night or Blessing* (314), he wishes, in the frank manner of the age, all married bliss to the bride and bridegroom. The Northleighs settled at Dean Prior after their marriage, and in the parish register we find the entries of their children's births.

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Another poem of a festive character, which throws pleasant light upon Herrick's life at Dean Prior, is that entitled *The Meadow Verse, or Anniversary, to Mistress Bridget Lowman* (354). The Lowmans, like the Yardes, were the vicar-poet's parishioners, and were also relatives of Sir Edward Giles. Giles Lowman had married early in 1642 Welthian Austyn of Totnes, but his wife had died in the following year, and it was probably after her death that he had invited his sister Bridget to come and live with him. The *Meadow Verse* which, honouring one of the many rural ceremonies of the village, celebrates Bridget Lowman as "the meadow's deity" and "princess of the feast," is full of gay compliment; but in the *Parting Verse* which follows (355), and which was recited when the feast was ended, a note of melancholy is heard; and the poet, mindful of his griefs and his grey hairs, wonders whether, when next year's anniversary comes round, he will be alive to sing another meadow-verse in Bridget Lowman's honour.

The life of the country vicar in his cell has often been represented as a life of solitude, broken only by the faithful ministrations of his house-keeper, Prudence Baldwin. Such a representation, however, though based on the evidence of certain of the poet's own statements, is only partially true. Quite apart from Herrick's share in the life of the village, we have evidence that

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he both visited, and received visits from, friends at a distance, and also that for some length of time one of his sisters-in-law was living with him. The reader need scarcely be reminded that Herrick was by temperament no hermit, and that, if he practised at times the cloistral virtues, it was from compulsion and not from choice. The poem, entitled *To his Maid, Prew* (387), tells us that during the pleasant summer months the vicarage was not without guests. Who they were we know not, but it is pleasant to imagine that the poet gathered around his simple board at Dean Prior some of the old comrades of the "tribe of Ben," and renewed, amid wassail bowls, spiced to the brim, the memories of by-gone years. When the guests have departed, the vicarage seems lonely, and the poet seizes the occasion to do honour to the faithful housekeeper who does not quit his side.

When Herrick bade farewell to his many London friends and relations in 1629, many entreaties must have been made that he should soon return ; "the music of a feast" could ill be spared from the festive board of the Apollo chamber at Temple Bar. We do not know to what extent the poet was able to comply with such entreaties, but there is evidence that he paid a visit to the old scenes in 1640. There is a curious poem in *Musarum Deliciæ*, published in 1655, the author of which was either

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Herrick's old friend Sir John Mennes, or James Smith. It is entitled *To Dr Weekes : an Invitation to London*, and from it we quote the following verses :

How now, my John, what, is't the care
Of thy small flock that keeps thee there ?
Or hath the bishop, in a rage,
Forbid thy coming on our stage ?
Or want'st thou coin, or want'st thou steed ?
These are impediments indeed.
But, for thy flock, thy sexton may
In due time ring, and let them pray.
A bishop, with an offering,
May be brought unto any thing.
For want of steed, I oft see Vic
Trudge up to town with hazel stick ;
For coin, two sermons by the way
Will host, hostess and tapster pay.
A willing mind pawns wedding-ring,
Wife, gown, books, children, anything ;
No way neglected, nought too dear,
To see such friends as thou hast here. . . .
Ships lately from the islands came
With wines thou never heard'st their name :
Montefiasco, Frontiniac,
Viatico, and that old Sack
Young Herric took to entertain
The muses in a sprightly vein. . . .
A London goal, with friends and drink,
Is worth your vicarage, I think.

This amusing address to the vicar of Sherwell, with its pointed allusion to Weekes' friend, the author of the *Welcome* and *Farewell to Sack*, gives us shrewd insight into the temptations

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which beset the country vicar who had said farewell to the revelry of London. It can scarcely be doubted that the Vicar of Dean Prior was favoured with similar invitations, in verse or in prose, from the same circle of friends, and on one occasion at any rate the invitation was accepted. In a State Paper, undated, but belonging to the year 1640, we come upon the following disconcerting statement :

Thomsen Parsons hath had a Bastard lately ; shee was brought to bedd at Greenw^{ch}.

Mr Hericque a Minister possest of a very good Living in Devonshire hath not resided there haveing noe Lycence for his non-residence and not being Chapline to any Noble man or man qualified by Law as I heare, his Lodging is at Westminster in the little Amrie at Nicholas Wilkes his house where the said Thomsen Parsons lives.

The endorsement of the letter is as follows :

Mr Delles man abt Mr Henrique [*sic*] a minister.

The statement, and the apparent insinuation of Mr Dell's man, call for notice. William Dell was secretary to Archbishop Laud, and among the State Papers are several references to him in the discharge of his duties. It was apparently his office to enquire into any breaches of canonical law, and any delinquencies on the part of clergymen who came under his special jurisdiction. In the discharge of these duties he doubtless had a number of men in his employ,

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and the writer of the above letter was one of these. It can hardly be doubted that "Mr Herricque," though the spelling in the endorsement is apparently "Henrique," is the author of the *Hesperides*. But who was Thomsen Parsons? Among the *Hesperides* we meet with the following :

ON THOMASIN PARSONS (979).

Grow up in beauty, as thou dost begin,
And be of all admired, Thomasin.

Also this :

TO MISTRESS DOROTHY PARSONS (500).

If thou ask me, dear, wherefore
I do write of thee no more,
I must answer, sweet, thy part
Less is here than in my heart.

Mr A. W. Pollard is able to inform us who Thomasin and Dorothy Parsons were. They were the daughters of one of Herrick's musical acquaintances, Mr John Parsons, who was organist and master of the choristers at Westminster Abbey in the reign of James I., and died in 1623.¹ There is no need to accept the insinuation of Mr Dell's man that Herrick was concerned with Thomasin Parsons' child. There is no record among the State Papers of any further steps being taken in the matter by either the archbishop's secretary or his master.

¹ See Pollard's edition of *Herrick*, i. 318.

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It may be that Laud was too busy with other matters in 1640 to enquire into the suggestion of misconduct brought against a clergyman from Devonshire, or it may be that on examination he found Herrick innocent. We all know the couplet which rounds off the *Hesperides* :

To his book's end this last line he'd have placed :
Jocund his muse was, but his life was chaste—

but the importance which we attach to this statement is somewhat lessened by the fact that it is a quotation from Ovid :

Vita verecunda est, musa jocosa, mihi.¹

The same declaration, however, is made, with some display of earnestness, in the poem *To his Tombmaker* (546), and those who have learnt to recognise the candour of Herrick in the *Hesperides* will be disposed to accept his claim to purity of life, in spite of " Mr Dell's man " :

Go I must ; when I am gone,
Write but this upon my stone ;
Chaste I liv'd, without a wife ;
That's the story of my life.
Strewings need none, every flower
Is in this word bachelor.

Leaving the matter as it stands, it is interesting to find that Herrick while in London was

¹ *Tristia*, ii. 354.

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residing in his "beloved Westminster," in one of the houses in the Little Aumry close to the Abbey. During his stay there he must have seen a good deal of old friends and kinsfolk, and it is probable that some of the poems to the Soames and Stones—his relations on his mother's side—and to the family of his brother Nicholas, the London merchant, were written at this time.

It seems likely that what brought the poet to town in 1640 was the importunate demand of his verses for printer's ink. Herrick, acting in accordance with the fashion set by Sidney and some other Elizabethan poets, had up to now neglected to publish any of his verses. They had circulated freely in manuscript, as the poems in the Ashmole, Rawlinson, and Harleian collections show, and as is also evident from statements made in many of the poems themselves. But the thought of printing his effusions had been distasteful to him. In a couplet, entitled *Posting to Printing* (1022), he says,

Let others to the printing press run fast ;
Since after death comes glory, I'll not haste.

But the march of years, bringing with it the death of friends in whose keeping his poetic fame chiefly rested, had led him to change his mind. It was all very well to invite noble Westmorland and gallant Newark to be the foster-fathers of his verses when their begetter was no more ;

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but in them "nature's copy's not eterne," and Herrick clung to the faith in the immortality of his fame with a tenacity which has never been equalled. If this immortality was to be won, printing was necessary. As yet only one of his poems had been published. This was a truncated portion of *Oberon's Feast*, which had appeared in 1635, in a small volume bearing the following title-page :

A | Description | of the King and Queene of |
Fayries, their habit, fare, their | abode, pompe
and state. | Beeing very delightfull to the sense,
and | full of mirth. | [Woodcut.] | London. |
Printed for Richard Harper, and are to be sold |
at his shop, at the Hospitall gate, 1635.

✢ The place of honour in this collection of poems is awarded to Herrick's friend Sir Simon Steward, who contributes a poem, entitled *A Description of the King of Faery's Clothes*, which is declared to have been written as early as 1626. Next follows Herrick's poem, which is here entitled *A Description of his Diet*. Three other poems, *Orpheus*, *The Fairies Fegaries*, and *The Melancholy Lover's Song* from Fletcher's *Nice Valour*, bring the volume to a close. It is unknown whether Herrick had any knowledge of, or share in, the publication of this volume of fairy poems.

Four years later we meet with the following entry, in the Stationers' Register :

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“4 Nov. 1639. Entred for his Copie under the hands of doctor Wykes and Master Featherston, warden, An Addicion of some excellent Poems to Shakespeare's Poems by other gentlemen, vizt., His Mistris drawne and his mind by Benjamin Jonson. An Epistle to B. J. by Francis Beaumont. His Mistris Shade by R. Herrick, etc., vi. d.”

This volume was printed in the following year, and the poem here described as *His Mistris Shade* proves to be another version, with numerous variants, of the poem in the *Hesperides*, entitled *The Apparition of his Mistress calling him to Elysium* (575). On this occasion Herrick appears in noble company, and it may be that the inclusion of his poem in a volume containing verses by Shakespeare, Jonson, and Beaumont, was due to the tribute of esteem which *His Mistris Shade* brought to the memory of the last two poets. Mention is made of Shakespeare in this poem, and his mistress finds the authors of *Evadne* and *Every Man in his Humour* walking in the Elysian fields in the company of Homer, Anacreon, Virgil, Horace, “witty Ovid” and “soft Catullus.”

The poem is one of the most sustained of the *Hesperides*, and suffers nothing by comparison with those of the mighty ones with which it is

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associated. The publisher of the volume was John Benson, and the licencer who is referred to as "doctor Wykes" was the poet's tried friend, the vicar of Sherwell.

To be associated as a poet with Shakespeare, Jonson, and Beaumont was no small honour for one who until now had to seek his reputation mainly among the circle of friends in which his manuscripts had circulated, and Herrick's last scruples as to publishing his poems were now swept away. Five months after the above entry in the Stationers' Register, we meet with the following :

"29 Ap. 1640. Entred for his Copie under the hands of Master Hanley, and Master Bourne, warden, *The Severall Poems*, written by Master Robert Herrick. vj. d."

The publisher who applied for this licence was Andrew Crooke. Of this volume nothing is known ; no copy has been traced, and it is uncertain whether the poems ever passed through the press. Did the poet, whose fastidious taste is expressed in his request to Julia to burn his poems rather than let them go forth unperfected, stay the printer's hand at the last moment, or did some one else step in and counsel delay ? We can only conjecture.

It may well have been with some reluctance that Herrick returned to his remote Devonshire parsonage after this visit to London. Although

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not yet fifty, he had begun to feel old, and with this sense of aging years, his interest in country activities probably lessened, while his appreciation of the comforts and good-fellowship of the town grew stronger. He is fond of telling us in his poems of his grey hairs and the approach of old age, but the following poem, written in the year 1640-1, reiterates the theme with new earnestness :—

A wearied pilgrim, I have wandered here
Twice five-and-twenty, bate me but one year ;
Long I have lasted in this world, 'tis true,
But yet those years that I have lived, but few.
Who by his grey hairs doth his lusters tell,
Lives not those years, but he that lives them well.
One man has reached his sixty years, but he,
Of all those threescore, has not lived half three.
He lives who lives to virtue ; men who cast
Their ends for pleasure, do not live, but last.¹

It is possible that, when he made the journey back to Dean Prior, he was not alone. In the verses, entitled *No Spouse but a Sister* (31), he declares with considerable emphasis that he will spend his days as a bachelor :—

And never take a wife
To crucify my life,—

but will keep house with a sister. The promise which he here makes seems to have been kept ; for in the list of burials in the register at Dean Prior

¹ *On Himself* (1088).

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mention is made of "Mrs Elizabeth Hearicke," who was buried on April 11, 1643, Elizabeth Herrick was his sister-in-law, and he wrote an epitaph on her death—No. 72 in the *Hesperides*. She was the wife of his brother William, who died between 1629—the date of Julian Herrick's will, in which he is mentioned—and 1632, when his will was proved. She may have come to live with her brother-in-law immediately after her husband's death, or, as just indicated, she may have accompanied him there after his visit to London in 1640.

The death of his sister-in-law, taking place as it did under his roof and at a time when civil war was raging in the land, must have brought sad and serious thoughts to the poet's mind. It is tempting to think of Herrick as the poet of eternal youthfulness, the maker of love-posies and the braider of garlands, the idle singer of an empty day. And it is probable that had he died in 1635, or even in 1640, such a conception would need little adjustment. But, scattered amid the lighter and gayer fancies of the *Hesperides*, are a number of poems which tell of sorrow, old age, decay of faculties, and approaching death. It is natural to connect these with the closing years of his stay at Dean Prior, though some of them may have been written in transient moods of despondency at an earlier period. References to old age and death are found in

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poems of varied character, but they are most frequent in the verses which he addresses to his mistresses or to himself. The moods in which he faces the inevitable are very varied. Often enough he contemplates death in a half-playful and half-pathetic manner—the pathos being of the lightest—as in the fanciful *Divination by a Daffodil* (107) or the address *To Robin Redbreast* (50). At other times he is more serious, as for instance when he writes the poem entitled *His Winding-sheet* (515), or *His last Request to Julia* (1095).

To private bereavement, and the sense of advancing old age, there was added, during these last years at Dean Prior, the anxiety caused by the trend of public affairs, and the consciousness of being on the side of the losing party. Herrick was by temperament and associations a Royalist, and though some members of his family sided with the Parliamentary cause, his allegiance to the king remained unshaken. It is not quite easy to determine his political tenets from the sentiments expressed in his verses. The great controversy which ended in the Civil War called forth from him a number of gnomic utterances, expressed for the most part in epigrammatic couplets. In some of these he appears as the exponent of extreme monarchical ideas. What, for instance, could be more in keeping with Stuart pretensions than the following?—

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'Twixt Kings and subjects there's this mighty odds :
Subjects are taught by men ; kings, by the gods.¹

The gods to kings the judgment give to sway ;
The subjects' only glory to obey.²

On the other hand, the arbitrary conduct of Charles I. in the matter of taxation calls forth from him a mild protest in *Moderation* (780), and a more energetic one in *Bad Princes Pill the People* (826) :—

Like those infernal deities which eat
The best of all the sacrificed meat,
And leave their servants but the smoke and sweat ;

So many kings, and primates too, there are,
Who claim the fat and fleshy for their share,
And leave their subjects but the starved ware.

The protest is couched in general terms, but it can hardly be doubted that the reference is to Charles I. and Laud.

But though Herrick, like many another Royalist, may have chafed under arbitrary taxation, he was absolutely loyal to the king as soon as matters passed out of the bounds of parliamentary controversy into those of civil war. Included among the *Hesperides* are a number of poems which introduce us to that great conflict. Early in 1642, impending hostilities forced Charles and Henrietta apart. The latter

¹ *The Difference between Kings and Subjects* (25).

² *Obedience in Subjects* (269).

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left England for Holland, where she proceeded to purchase munitions of war for the campaign, while her husband went northwards to collect troops. The separation of husband and wife moved Herrick to write his verses *To the King and Queen upon their Unhappy Distances* (79).

Here he is full of hope, and prophecies with gladness of heart a speedy reunion of husband and wife. But as the war proceeded, and the Royalist cause experienced defeat after defeat, his heart sank within him, In his poems, *The Bad Season makes the Poet Sad* (612) and *Upon the Troublous Times* (596), he writes in a mood of deep depression, though still hoping against hope that things will right themselves and "Charles here rule as he before did reign."

O times most bad,
Without the scope
Of hope
Of better to be had !

Where shall I go,
Or whither run
To shun
This public overthrow ?

No places are,
This I am sure,
Secure
In this our wasting war.

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Some storms we've past,
Yet we must all
Down fall,
And perish at the last.

The sentiment of these verses is not very heroic, but the poet's fighting days, if they ever existed, were long since over.

In the early stages of the war Devonshire was in the hands of the Parliamentarians, but the victories of Lord Hopton at Stratton in Cornwall, in May 1643, had wrought a great change in the West. Herrick congratulated Hopton on his success,¹ and the latter replied in practical fashion by advancing on Devonshire and winning over the greater portion of it to the king's side.² With the summer of 1644, the war approached very near to Herrick's vicarage. Queen Henrietta Maria was at Exeter, and on June 16 gave birth to the Princess Henrietta there. Then, making her way stealthily to the Cornish coast, she embarked on July 14 for France. A fortnight later, Charles himself was at Exeter, while a section of the Parliamentary army, under Essex, was at Tavistock, still nearer to Dean Prior. Herrick seized the occasion of the king's proximity to address to him a poem, *To the King upon his Coming with his Army into the West* (77), as loyal in feeling as it is beautiful in expression:—

¹ See the poem, *To the Lord Hopton on his Fight in Cornwall* (1002).

² See S. R. Gardiner, *History of the Great Civil War*, i. 162.

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Welcome, most welcome, to our vows and us,
Most great and universal genius!
The drooping West, which hitherto has stood
As one in long-lamented widowhood,
Looks like a bride now, or a bed of flowers
Newly refreshed both by the sun and showers.
War, which before was horrid, now appears
Lovely in you, brave prince of cavaliers.
A deal of courage in each bosom springs
By your access, O you, the best of kings!
Ride on with all white omens; so that where
Your standard's up, we fix a conquest there.

The hopefulness which warmed the poet's drooping spirits was, for the time at least, well sustained, and to Charles the verses of the Royalist vicar must have seemed of fair augury. The two armies met at Lostwithiel in Cornwall, at the end of August, and the battle resulted in a complete victory for the king.

Early in the following year, the last of the western campaigns took place. Fairfax, "the rider of the white horse," as the Yorkshire people called him, was besieging Exeter and making raids up and down the county. On January 18th he carried Dartmouth by storm, and a day or two later he was at Totnes, five miles from Dean. While there, he called for a thousand recruits, and three times that number flocked to his standard. Nothing could show more plainly the change in temper of the people of South Devon towards the two contending parties. "We are

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come," said Cromwell to the new recruits, "to set you, if possible, at liberty from your taskmasters," and his word was believed.¹ This change in temper must have weighed heavily upon the vicar of Dean Prior, and doubtless inspired him to write his peevish outbursts upon the "rocky generation, currish, churlish as the seas," amongst whom he must still continue to live. He summons up courage to address a spirited poem to Sir John Berkeley,² who was bravely holding Exeter against the besiegers, and hails with gladness the arrival of Prince Charles at Exeter in the following August :—

Meanwhile thy prophets watch by watch shall pray,
While young Charles fights, and fighting wins the day :
That done, our smooth-faced poems all shall be
Sung in the high doxology of thee.³

But the poet's prevailing mood is best expressed by his poems *Upon the Troublous Times* and *The Bad Season makes the Poet Sad*, already referred to, or by his beautiful dirge upon the death of Lord Bernard Stuart, slain at Rowton Heath on September 24, 1646.⁴ Reduced to inactivity himself, he could but sit gloomily over his hearth with his "familiar Lar," and nurse his wrath to keep it warm ; or, in serener moments,

¹ Gardiner, *The Great Civil War*, ii. 431.

² "To Sir John Berkeley, Governor of Exeter" (745).

³ *To Prince Charles upon his Coming to Exeter* (756).

⁴ No. 219.

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seek to draw comfort from those *Good Thoughts in Bad Times* which the genial optimist, Thomas Fuller, had just published at Exeter.

The ejection of those clergymen who had refused to subscribe to the Solemn League and Covenant had begun as early as 1643, but Herrick's call did not come yet. For four years after that date he brooded in his vicarage, or took his solitary walks through the village, where there was neither maypole nor hock-cart to cheer his sight ; and then at last, in 1647, the summons came. With an elation of spirits that would have done credit to a schoolboy, he left his parishioners to the spiritual ministrations of Mr John Syms, and set out for London, "blest place of my nativity," registering his solemn vow, as he crossed the rocky bed of Dean Burn, that never again would he endure the warty incivility of itself or its people :

With whom I did, and may re-sojourn, when
Rocks turn to rivers, rivers turn to men.

CHAPTER V

LAST YEARS

WHEN Herrick crossed Dean Burn and took the high-road to Exeter, his intention seems to have been, not to proceed direct to London, but to pay a visit first of all to his friend Weekes, at Sherwell near Barnstaple. Weekes, according to Anthony à Wood, "suffered much for the Royal Cause," but it is uncertain whether he was dispossessed of his Devonshire living at this time.¹ He was, at any rate, still in possession when the notice to quit was served upon his friend. The last of Herrick's poems to his peculiar friend John Weekes, written upon his ejection from Dean Prior, is a characteristic effusion of humour, *bonhomie*, and independence of spirit :—

Since shed or cottage I have none,
I sing the more that thou hast one,
To whose glad threshold and free door
I may a poet come, though poor,
And eat with thee a savoury bit,
Paying but common thanks for it. . . .²

¹ See Walker, *Sufferings of the Clergy*, p. 392.

² No. 1056.

Cambridge St Johns

In the first place to forgive my dear
the second only reiterates the former
letter of which (as I may justly wonder)
I heard no more appearance: neither concerning
the payment or receipt of the letter.
(It is best known to your self) upon which
ignorance I have sent this or at least, entreating
you to pay to me Adrian maxims book for
of the black letters the sum of 20 to
from whom to flow as it is said if shall
renew a few acknowledgments I shall
not need to amplify my paper for this
warrants sufficient. I expect your countenance
and your furtherance to my well being
who hath power to command my friends
to intercede. I have been your guide
to direct you to perfection which is the end of
man's endeavour.

I expect an answer from
me Adrian concerning the
receipt

Robin Herrick
devoted to you
Ever eternally

FACSIMILE OF ONE OF HERRICK'S LETTERS
In the possession of Canon Egerton Leigh

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We do not know how long Herrick stayed with his friend, but the fact that he bore in his wallet the little volume of poems which was to win him his long-coveted immortality must have made him impatient to reach London and secure for his treasure the permanence of print. The joy which was his when at last the metropolis was reached is recorded in his memorable *Return to London* (713). The curious tangle of truth and error which goes to make up Wood's account of Herrick in the *Athenae* furnishes us with the information that during a part of the time which elapsed between 1647 and 1662, the poet was residing in St Anne's Parish, Westminster. John Walker, who, though a Devonian, knew very little about Herrick, says in his *Sufferings of the Clergy*, that "after his ejection he returned to London, and, having no fifths paid him, was subsisted by charity until the Restoration."¹ It is likely enough that both statements are correct as far as they go. Nothing is more probable than that the ejected vicar should take up his residence in his "beloved Westminster," where, as we have seen, he was living in 1640; nor need we take offence at Walker's phrase that "he subsisted by charity," provided that we understand by it simply that, having no income of his own, he was dependent upon the hospitality of relations and friends.

¹ *Sufferings of the Clergy*, p. 263.

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It can hardly be that Herrick suffered from poverty during his exile. The presence in London of wealthy relations, including his own brother Nicholas,¹ and the families of Soame and Stone, with whom he stood, as his poems show, on terms of intimacy, makes such an idea incredible. We learn from what he says in *The Plunder* (460) that he left Dean Prior bereft of everything, but we can well believe that in 1647, as in 1629, he found among his numerous relations and friends plenty "to bear my charges." It is true that of his old patrons some were dead, and others, including Endymion Porter, in sore straits. But Mildmay Fane, Earl of Westmorland was at hand, and busied, like Herrick himself, with the publication of his verses.² Another friend of distinction was Henry Pierrepont, eldest son of Viscount Newark, one of the "foster-fathers" of the poet's verses, who was created Marquess of Dorchester in 1644, and to whom is addressed the *Ultimus Heroum* (962).

Herrick's poetic activity continued right up to the time of publication. When Charles I. came to reside at Hampton Court on August 24, 1647, under the protection of the Parliamentary army,

¹ Nicholas Herrick was living in Goodman's Fields, in the parish of St Mary Matfelon, county of Middlesex, where he died, May 23, 1665. See Smith's *Obituary* (Camden Society) and *Miscellanea Genealogica et Heraldica*, Second series, i. 98.

² They appeared under the title, *Otia Sacra*, in the same year as the *Hesperides*.

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the poet, loyal to his sovereign to the end, welcomed his arrival there with glowing verses which, like the lyrics of earlier days, were set to music and sung in the royal presence. To some of those who listened to the song there must have seemed grim irony in the strains of the chorus :

Long live the King ! and, to accomplish this,
We'll from our own add far more years to his.¹

And now at last the time, long foreseen and long delayed, had arrived when the poet was to secure for his minstrelsy that safe-conduct to fame which he had coveted with no ordinary avidity. His book of poems had, he tells us, been passing freely from hand to hand in these London days,² and with each meed of praise that was bestowed upon it, the desire to publish must have grown stronger. He found publishers in John Williams and Francis Eglesfield of St Paul's Churchyard, and the printing of the manuscript began. It seems that his first intention was to publish the *Noble Numbers* before the *Hesperides*. In the original edition of 1648 his sacred verses, though they stand last, have a separate title-page, which bears the date 1647, whereas the *Hesperides* are dated in the following year. This intention, however, of keeping his best wine until the end of the feast was subsequently abandoned, and all

¹ *To the King* (961).

² *To his Book* (3).

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subsequent editors have followed the order of the original edition. There is some difference of view as to Herrick's share in the ordering of the poems as they stand in the printed volume. It was the opinion of Grosart that "the poet himself had nothing to do with the arrangement or disarrangement" of the poems, and this opinion is shared by some later editors. It rests mainly upon the total disregard of chronological order, and indeed of any other order, in the *Hesperides*, which makes it impossible, in the case of the majority of the verses, to say when they were written. But it is by no means certain that this disorder was not intentional on the poet's part. It is clear that he exercised some supervision over the printer. He prefixed to the volume a number of corrections of printer's errors, together with the following apology for their occurrence :

For these transgressions, which thou here dost see,
Condemn the printer, reader, and not me,
Who gave them forth good grain, though he mistook
The seed ; so sowed these tares throughout my book.

Had the printer, in addition to making typographical errors, wantonly disarranged the order of the poems, Herrick, we may readily believe, would have drawn attention to the fact ; nay, more, would he not have seared the miscreant with an epigram, white-hot from the caldron of his wrath,

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and enshrined it within the covers of his book! The disorderliness of the collection is also not quite so complete as it seems. We may not go as far as Henry Morley and recognise the poet's "design to use poems as foils and settings to one another," but the same editor is certainly right in drawing attention to the careful opening and close of the book."¹ The first eight poems in the *Hesperides* are clearly introductory. They give the "argument," tell us something of the manner of composition and of the poet's misgivings as to publication; they indicate "when he would have his verses read," and include an admonition "to the sour reader." In like manner, the last seven poems are an obvious farewell, in which he reiterates his hopes of poetic immortality, dismisses his Ariel from his service and commits his poems to the safe keeping of kindly spirits—or the fire:

Go thou forth, my book; though late,
Yet be timely fortunate.
It may chance good luck may send
Thee a kinsman, or a friend,
That may harbour thee, when I
With my fates neglected lie.
If thou know'st not where to dwell,
See, the fire's by: farewell.²

It must also be borne in mind that, in placing side by side a lyric of exquisite beauty and a

¹ Introduction to *Hesperides* in Morley's Universal Library.

² *To his Book* (1125).

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coarse epigram, Herrick had, in some measure, the high warrant of his friend and master, Ben Jonson. In that poet's *Underwoods* we find a love song of great beauty, and almost immediately before it an "Epigram to the Smallpox." A similar disorder also appears in the *Carmina* of Catullus, which were also among the most prized possessions of Herrick. In the absence, therefore, of all proof to the contrary, it is natural to assume that the arrangement of the *Hesperides* was in accordance with the poet's wishes. Another theory advanced by Dr Grosart is that "the verse celebrations addressed to friends and eminent contemporaries were evidently designed to form a separate work." The matter is not one of importance, seeing that such a work, if it ever existed in manuscript, was never published. The theory has been carefully examined by Dr E. E. Hale in his dissertation, *Die chronologische Anordnung der Dichtungen Robert Herricks*, and with his refutation of it I am disposed to agree.

The volume was dedicated to the "most illustrious and most hopeful Prince, Charles, Prince of Wales," who is addressed in verses which fully come up to the standard of adulation which the occasion, and the age, demanded. Eighteen years before he had sung the birth of

¹ Grosart, Memorial Introduction to *Hesperides*, p. cxiv.

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the prince, and in 1645 he had welcomed him with a pæan of exultation on his coming to Exeter. The title-page deserves more careful consideration. It reads as follows : "*Hesperides* : or the Works, both Humane and Divine, of Robert Herrick, Esq." There are here three points to notice. First, the title *Hesperides*, including as it does the "humane and divine" poems, is clearly meant to be a general title, covering both the *Hesperides* proper and the *Noble Numbers*. In the second place, the addition of the word 'esquire' to Herrick's name suggests that on his ejection from Dean Prior he had assumed layman's dress, and as a layman desired to appear before the public. Again, the beautiful title, *Hesperides*, is significant. It can hardly be doubted that in adopting it, he intended his readers to understand that it was as "children of the West Country" that he wished his poems to be regarded. Some of them, as we know, were written elsewhere ; but the title, read in the light of what he tells us in his poem, *To his Muse* (2) makes it probable that the majority of them belong to the Dean Prior period.

The design of the frontispiece, with the bust of the poet on a pedestal, was the work of the engraver William Marshall, who had, earlier in his career, engraved portraits of Bacon, Donne, and Milton. This, our only portrait of Herrick,

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is worse than nothing at all, for it can be little better than a caricature. We may, perhaps, accept the lustrous eye, the thick, tight curls, and the curious beak-like nose which calls to mind the busts of the Emperor Vespasian; but the fat stolidity of the rest of the face, together with the grotesque neck, leave us incredulous, or indignant.

It is to be feared that the reception accorded to Herrick's volume of poems by the reading public fell far short of his hopes and expectations. Thomas Hunt of Exeter may have quickly disposed of his copies of the work among the poet's friends and admirers in Devonshire, but it is doubtful whether the same can be said of the London firm of publishers. No second edition appeared until more than a hundred and fifty years afterwards. The immortality of fame which the poet had promised himself and those in whose honour he indited his verses must have seemed to him a delusive will-o'-the-wisp. That immortality is now at last assured, but it is doubtful whether even Herrick, with all his buoyancy and assurance of poetic power, could have strained his gaze as far forward as the nineteenth century, which redeemed him from oblivion and set him amongst his peers. It is to be feared that to the sadness which must have fallen on Herrick in the long years of Puritan

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rule, there was added the sense of failure in the hopes which had been so long and so fervently cherished. The small esteem which was set upon the poems at the time of their appearance has been attributed to the untowardness of the times. "Herrick," says Mr Edmund Gosse, "brought out the *Hesperides* a few months before the King was beheaded, and people were invited to listen to little madrigals upon Julia's stomacher at the singularly inopportune moment when the eyes of the whole nation were bent on the unprecedented phenomenon of the proclamation of an English republic."¹ It would be idle to deny that there is truth in Mr Gosse's words, yet it is doubtful whether the year 1648 was more inopportune for the publication of a volume of poems than the years which immediately preceded or those which immediately followed it. In this connection, too, it must be borne in mind that, within the years 1645-51, a large amount of poetry passed through the press, some of it being received with an appreciation which was not greatly lessened by the troubled state of national affairs. In 1645, the year of Naseby and Rowton Heath, appeared the poems of Milton and Waller—the former received with comparative silence, the latter with rapturous applause. In 1646 Crashaw's *Steps to the Temple* was published,

¹ *Seventeenth-Century Studies*, p. 115.

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and both Vaughan and Shirley saw through the press a volume of poems. In 1647 Abraham Cowley added to his already over-topping reputation by the publication of the *Mistress*. The year 1648 belongs almost exclusively to Herrick among poets of note, but the following year brought to light the epodes, odes, sonnets, and songs which Lovelace linked to the name of *Lucasta*, and Thomas Stanley's volume of *Translations* from Latin lyrists. In 1650 Vaughan published the first part of *Silex Scintillans* and in 1651 appeared Davenant's *Gondibert*, Vaughan's *Olor Iscanus*, the original poems of Stanley, and the collected works—poems and plays—of William Cartwright.

In the face of evidence such as this, the reasons for the neglect of Herrick, in his own and succeeding generations, must be sought, in part at least, elsewhere. They are to be found in the fact that for his most delicate and imperishable things the age was out of tune. When the wit of Cowley and Waller was in the ascendant, the imagination of Herrick was at its nadir. To the contemporaries of Samuel Pepys, the fairy-poems, the descriptions of May-poles, hock-carts, wassails, wakes, and lyrics like "The Mad Maid's Song" or "Corinna's going a-Maying," must have seemed, like the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, insipid and ridiculous.

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With the publication of the *Hesperides* in 1648, Herrick's work as a poet was practically over. The only known poem of his which belongs to a later date is *The New Charon*,¹ written on the death of the young Lord Hastings in 1649; like other lyrics of happier days it was set to music by the friend of Herrick and Milton, Mr Henry Lawes. The poem is in eclogue form, the speakers being Charon and Eucosmia; the latter was the daughter of Sir Theodore Mayerne, the physician, to whom Hastings was betrothed. It is not without delicate fancy, but the fact that the general idea of the poem is drawn from the earlier *Charon and Philomel* (730) is a sign of the author's waning power. Perhaps the chief interest in it is its inclusion in the volume of memorial verses, entitled *Lachrymae Musarum*, alongside of similar poems by Denham, Marvell, Dryden, and others. So placed, it associates Herrick with the master-poet of the Restoration in the same way that the verses, entitled *His Mistress' Shade*, published in 1640, had associated him with Shakespeare.

Of Herrick's life under the Commonwealth and Protectorate we know absolutely nothing. We may surmise that it was spent chiefly in London in the society of his relations, friends, and other "outed" clergymen: a visit to his

¹ Pollard, ii. 270.

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sister, Mercy Wingfield, and her family at Brantham in Suffolk was also doubtless paid. There must have been some small excitement for him in 1651, when his cousin, Richard Herrick, third son of Sir William, and Warden of the Collegiate Church of Manchester, was imprisoned in the Tower on a charge of high treason. There is no evidence of friendship between the poet and any of Sir William's sons since the time when the eldest of them, William, then an Oxford student, had proposed to pay a visit to Cambridge and lodge with Robert at the time of the royal visitation of 1615. Political sympathies had forced the cousins farther apart, for the family of Sir William had sided with the Parliament and shown strong Puritan leanings. Richard Herrick had, like his cousin, entered the Church, and in 1635 had been appointed to the important and lucrative post of Warden of the Collegiate Church of Manchester. He took an active part in the struggle of the succeeding years, published in 1641 three sermons in duodecimo, and dedicated them to the House of Commons. Amid the checkered fortunes of the Civil War, Richard Herrick, endowed as he was with some of his father's qualities for achieving material success, managed to hold his own; but in 1651 he was imprudent enough to join a party of discontented

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Presbyterians in what was known as the London Conspiracy, with the intention of overthrowing the republican form of government. On June 11, 1651, he was thrown into the Tower, and remained there in close custody for several months. On October 4, however, an order for his discharge was signed, and he was bound over to keep the peace on a bond of £400 and two sureties of £200 each, "if he can procure them."¹

The restoration of Charles II. to the throne of his fathers could have been desired by no one more heartily than the poet who had sung his birth and dedicated to him his most prized possession. He witnessed, we may be sure, the King's triumphal entry into London on May 29, 1660, and his coronation in Westminster Abbey eleven months later. We may well believe, too, that old as he now was—he was in his seventieth year when Charles was crowned—he looked to the King for promotion and for putting an end to the long period of inactivity, during which he had been dependent on others for the means of subsistence. Even before the King returned from his "travels," Samuel Pepys makes the following entry in his Diary: "May 21, 1660. At Court I find that all things grow high. The

¹ See *Calendar of State Papers*, 1651, pp. 247, 401, 457, 465, 466; also Grosart's *Memorial Introduction*, p. cclxxx., and *Dictionary of National Biography*.

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old clergy talk as being sure of their lands again, and laugh at the Presbytery ; and it is believed that the sales of the King's and Bishops' lands will never be confirmed by Parliament, there being nothing now in any man's power to hinder them and the King from doing what they had a mind, but everybody willing to submit to anything." But the restoration of the ejected clergymen to their livings did not proceed with the rapidity which was expected. Until the passing of the Act of Uniformity, most of the Presbyterian ministers, including John Symes of Dean Prior, were safe. On May 31, 1662, we meet with another significant entry in Pepys' Diary: "The Act for Uniformity is lately printed, which, it is thought, will make mad work among the Presbyterian ministers. People of all sides are very much discontented ; some thinking themselves used, contrary to promise, too hardly ; and the other that they are not rewarded so much as they expected by the King." It would be pleasant to gain some inkling of Herrick's feelings at this time of clerical expectation. Did he hope for promotion to some prebend's stall such as his friend Weekes had enjoyed at Bristol under Charles I., or did he desire a living which would have allowed him to spend the remaining years of his life in the "blest place of his nativity" ? If such were his

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hopes, they met with disappointment. He was not passed over, but restored to the old living in "dull Devonshire," which he had promised to re-visit only when

Rocks turn to rivers, rivers turn to men.

John Syms, the Presbyterian, refused to subscribe to the Act of Uniformity, even as his predecessor had refused the Solemn League and Covenant. He was ejected on August 24, and then the parishioners of Dean Prior prepared to welcome back to their midst their former Vicar.

The home-coming of Herrick to Dean Prior in 1662 is a subject worthy of the painter's canvas. Arriving as he did in the autumn of the year, when the hock-cart was bringing in the last sheaves of the harvest, his return must have seemed to many a simple soul in the parish like the return—the re-incarnation—of some genial woodland divinity who, after long years of absence, had come back to dwell amongst them once more, to restore to them their wakes and may-poles, and to "wassail" their apple-trees against the ravages of the foul fiend, Flibbertigibbet. They had turned from him and reviled him in the dark days of the forties, and he had retorted with stinging epigrams ; but when he had left them, with the solemn vow never to return, they thought of the part which he had

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played in the rustic festivals that were now taken from them; and when they lay awake in bed, they remembered how he had taught them to repeat his *Litany to the Holy Spirit* until slumber overtook them. And now at last he had come back again in spite of his vow, and all was to be as before. There were to be Christmas mummings again, and the burning of brands on Candlemas day; charms might once more be pronounced at bread-making, and "the hag that rides the mare" be scared away at the sight of the hooks and shears suspended in the stables; above all, there was to be a blessed restoration of cakes and ale, and of "ginger hot i' the mouth." We can imagine the smile of amusement that played on the faces of priest and parishioners, as the former crossed the waters of the once execrated Dean Burn and entered the village. But it was not a "rocky generation" which conducted the vicar along the half-mile of Devonshire lanes which led to the church and the vicarage, where the faithful Prudence Baldwin, reinstated like her master, was waiting to receive him. On both sides there was something to forget, but also much to remember that was tender and true.

For twelve years he remained amongst his people, and then, in the October of the year 1674, a few months after John Milton, he passed away.

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No tombstone remains to mark the spot where he lies in the little churchyard that fronts the moor, but in the parish register we meet with the following entry :

Robert Herrick, Vicker, was buried y^e 15th day of
October, 1674.

Four years later, in the same register, another entry stands :

Prue Balden [i.e. Baldwin] was buried y^e 6th day of
January, 1678.

PART II
THE WORKS

CHAPTER I

THE LYRIC OF THE ENGLISH RENAISSANCE

TO appreciate aright the qualities of the *Hesperides*, it is necessary first of all to determine the relation in which those poems stand to contemporary poetry and to the poetry of the preceding age. Herrick, though much of his life was lived in seclusion, never outgrew the influences which moulded his youth; from first to last his poetry bears upon it the impress of the late Jacobean and early Caroline age. Ben Jonson, alive or dead, was still his master, and no poet paid the dues of discipleship more loyally. Again, the relation of Herrick to Jonson and other seventeenth century lyrists opens up a larger field of enquiry. In what position, we ask, does this Jacobean and Caroline lyric stand to the Elizabethan? Are the verses of Carew, Herrick and Suckling in the direct line of succession from that great outburst of Elizabethan song, the preluding strains of which are heard in the lyrics of Wyatt and Surrey? And if so, what differences of form and temper can be observed as we pass from the sixteenth to the seventeenth century? In reply

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to questions such as these, it may at once be said that there is a general tendency to regard English lyric poetry from the beginning of Elizabeth's reign onwards to the Restoration as possessed of a certain unity. It is the lyric of the English Renaissance, and as such, it falls into line with the drama of the Renaissance, the evolution of which falls, roughly speaking, within the same period. If the spirit of the Renaissance is breathed into the sonnets of Sidney or Spenser, so is it also into the songs of Milton's *Comus* and *Arcades*.

But if there is general agreement as to the period over which this Renaissance lyric extends, there is the widest divergence of opinion as to the relationship which the lyric poetry of the seventeenth century bears to that of the sixteenth. On the one hand, we are told that the Jacobean and Caroline lyric shows the gradual dying away of the splendid harmonies of Elizabethan song ; on the other, that this later lyric, so far from exhibiting signs of decay, marks the triumphant consummation of all that has gone before. The former view is that taken by certain distinguished American students of our lyric poetry. Thus Professor Schelling assures us that, when we reach the days of the Stuart kings, "the golden summer of the English lyric is on the wane ;"¹ while Professor Barrett Wendell, tracing the

¹ *A Book of Elizabethan Lyrics*, p. xxxiii.



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changes in the temper of the English people during the seventeenth century, bids us see the process of disintegration at work in the Caroline lyric as surely as in the Caroline drama.¹ The opposite view is held by the most distinguished master of lyric poetry in our own generation, Mr Swinburne. "It is singular," he writes, "that the first great age of English lyric poetry should have been also the one great age of English dramatic poetry: but it is hardly less singular that the lyric school should have advanced as steadily as the dramatic school declined from the promise of its dawn. Born with Marlowe, the drama rose at once with Shakespeare to heights inaccessible before and since and for ever, to sink through bright gradations of glorious decline to its final and beautiful sunset in Shirley: but the lyrical record that begins with the author of *Euphues* and *Endymion* grows fuller if not brighter through a whole chain of constellations till it culminates in the crowning star of Herrick."²

The contemporaneous expression of views so divergent as these calls for a close examination of the lyric of the English Renaissance, and a judicious weighing of the evidence for and against the theory of decadence. In making such an examination, it will be convenient to

¹ *The Seventeenth Century in English Literature.*

² Preface to Herrick's Poems (Muses' Library edition).

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ignore for the time being the work of Herrick himself; the relation which his poems bear to the general poetic tendencies of the age will be the theme of a subsequent chapter.

During the first thirty years of Elizabeth's reign the form of lyric most in vogue was the popular song. This was an heirloom of the fast vanishing Middle Ages, and it is no easy matter to discover whence it came. In its dancing rhythm, in its artlessness and spontaneity, in its fondness for a refrain and for repetitions, some of which take the form of meaningless interjections like "Hey, nonny, nonny!" it recalls, in no uncertain way, the communal folk-song of a primitive age. But with this element of folk-song are mingled strains of a less remote ancestry. Among these we may discover the convivial drinking-songs of medieval *scholares vagantes*, with Walter Map as their Coryphæus; also Christmas carols of Norman origin, acclaiming with joyous cries of Noel! Noel! the birth of the infant Christ, or, in lighter mood, welcoming the entrance into the baronial hall of the festive boar's head of Yuletide:

*Caput apri refero
Resonans laudes domino.*

With these, too, are mingled the religious and didactic songs, and the semi-religious lullabies, which sprang to life under the shadow of church

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and minster, and which had withstood the Reformation ; likewise, the popular love-songs of medieval minstrelsy, the pedlar-songs and hunting-songs ; and, finally, all the store of lyric mirth which ushered in, and gave a ceremonial character to, the great festivals of May-day, Harvest-Home and Christmas.

Until the influence of the Italian Renaissance was felt in England, this popular song was truly national in character ; its strains were heard at the monarch's court as well as in the market-place or the furrow. In Wynkyn de Worde's *Song-Book*,¹ published in 1530, and intended to serve the needs of Henry VIII. and his courtiers, appear such popular songs as "Mynyon, go trym," "We Maydins berth the bell-a," and "Beware my lytyl fynger." Nearly half a century later, too, when Queen Elizabeth was at Kenilworth, we find that Leicester summoned to his aid the versatile "Captain Cox," a mason of Coventry, who, among other forms of entertainment, produced "a bunch of ballets and songs, all ancient," with which to delight the queen's ears ; and included amongst these we find "Bonny lass upon a green," "By a bank as I lay," "Over a whinny, Meg," and other songs of a distinctly popular character.²

¹ Edited by R. Imelmann, (Shakespeare Jahrbuch, xxxix., p. 121.)

² *Captain Cox, his Ballads and Books*, ed. F. J. Furnivall (Ballad Society Publications) 1871.

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A few years later, however, the popular song in England received a blow from which it has never entirely recovered. In 1588, Nicholas Yonge published his *Musica Transalpina*, a collection of madrigals and canzonets, translated from such Italian authors as Petrarch and Ariosto, and set to music by Orlando di Lasso, Alfonso Ferrabosco, and other Italian musicians of the period. Now the madrigal, with its contrapuntal music, its single strophe, its Italian grace and Petrarchan sentiment, was directly opposed to the homely words and simple recurring melody, with attendant refrain, of the popular song; and, at a time when everything Italian was welcomed with open arms by English courtiers, it is easy to see that, in the conflict which arose between the two classes of song-lyric, the madrigal must win the victory. The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book shows that one or two of the early madrigalists, like William Byrd and Thomas Morley, were still ready to supply musical settings to such a popular song as, "The Carman's Whistle," but their main energies were directed towards the furtherance of the Italian song-lyric. Between twenty and thirty collections of madrigals and canzonets were published in England between 1588 and the close of the century, and in the production of these the leading English composers of the time, Morley, Weelkes, Wilbye, Farmer, and others, were directly engaged.

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The literary quality of these madrigals is for the most part poor ; and only in a small number of instances do we know who wrote the words, which throughout, and contrary to the practice in the popular song, are subservient to the music. A recent historian of English music, Mr E. Walker, speaking of the old madrigal books, says : " The words are printed in so casual and incomplete a fashion as to suggest that even when they were sung, the singer was allowed a very free hand." ¹ A few of the madrigals and canzonets have a strain of homeliness in them, and touch on popular themes almost after the manner of the folk-song. Such is the case, for instance, with the twentieth canzonet in Thomas Morley's collection of 1593, in which a rustic wedding is presented in the following idyllic manner :—

List, hark yon Minstrells, how fine they firck it,
And how the maids irck it,
With Kate and Will,
Tom and Gill.
Now a skip,
Then a trip,
Finely fet aloft,
Ther againe as oft.
All for Daphnes wedding day !
Hey ho, fine brave holiday ! ²

¹ *History of Music in England*, 1907, p. 60.

² Bolle, *Die gedruckten englischen Liederbücher* (Palæstra, vol. xxix, p. 65).

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But for the most part they are artificial, and foreign, both in sentiment and expression, to the genius of English folk-song. The prevailing theme is love, which is treated in the conventional fashion familiar to us in most of the sonnet-sequences of the same period, and the mood of the poet-lover is one of wistful melancholy. An air of unreality pervades the madrigals, and only very occasionally do they attain the unstudied grace and golden cadence of the best Miscellany-lyrics, or of the *Airs* which were destined to replace them after the turn of the century. The following madrigal, taken from John Wilbye's collection, published in 1598, is typical of the general style and average attainment of this form of lyric. From a musical standpoint Wilbye's work ranks very high :—

Alas, what a wretched life is this !
Nay, what a death, where tyrant Love commandeth.
My flowering days are in their prime declining,
All my proud hopes quite fallen, and life untwining.
My joys, each after other, in haste are flying,
And leave me dying
For her that scorns my crying.
O she from hence departs, my love refraining,
From whom, all heartless, alas, I die complaining.¹

The swift descent of the popular song from the banqueting-hall to the ale-house, as soon as the Italian song-lyric gained a footing in the land, is

¹ A. H. Bullen, *Some Shorter Elizabethan Lyrics*, 1903, p. 150.

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clearly indicated by George Puttenham. In his *Arte of English Poesie*, published only one year after the appearance of Yonge's *Musica Transalpina*, he speaks of the popular song in the following contemptuous manner: "The over busie and too speedy returne of one maner of tune [doth] too much annoy and as is were glut the eare, unlesse it be in small and popular Musickes, song by these *Cantabanqui* upon benches and barrells heads, where they have none other audience then boys or countrey fellows that passe by them in the streete; . . . also they be used in Carols and rounds and such light or lascivious Poemes, which are commonly more commodiously uttered by these buffons or vices in playes then by any other person."¹

Puttenham's reference to the "buffons or vices in playes" brings us in the next place to consider the lyrics scattered, often with lavish hand, through the dramas of the Elizabethan stage. Lyric poetry, in the form of the popular song, had found a place already in the Mystery and Morality plays of the medieval period; and when, early in Elizabeth's reign, we reach the beginnings of true comedy in England, we find that the value of the lyric as furnishing relief from the dramatic tension is fully recognised. Songs are frequent in *Ralph Roister Doister* and *Gammer Gurton's Needle*, and it

¹ Ed. Arber, p. 96.

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would be hard to find lyrics which cleave more closely to the popular tradition than "I mun be married a Sunday," of the former, or "Backe and syde go bare, go bare," of the latter. Lyly in his Court Comedies replaced the folk-songs by lyrics of a more cultured and artificial nature, but most of the dramas written for the public stage remain, until the close of the century, true to the artless speech and simple melodies of the popular song. Nothing, indeed, indicates the essentially popular character of the Elizabethan drama of this period more faithfully than the tenacity with which it clung to this form of lyric, at a time when madrigal, canzonet and ballet were in the noontide of their power. And of all the dramatists of the time Shakespeare remained throughout his career the most loyal to the native tradition. In his early venture, *Love's Labour's Lost*, he introduces art-lyrics, in the form of sonnets, side by side with such a simple song as "When daisies pied and violets blue ;" but the experiment is not repeated, and in his later dramas he keeps very close to the popular melodies. Shakespeare, too, is the only dramatist of the time who attempted to do for the folk-songs of England what Burns did, on a far larger scale, for the folk-songs of Scotland, that is, remodel them and endue them with new life. We know for a certainty that he did this in the case of Desdemona's willow-song, and it is

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probable that the same remodelling has taken place in the case of the jester's song at the end of *Twelfth Night*. And even where his songs are obviously new creations, and where they admit neither of refrain nor of recurring phrases, they still possess the simplicity of manner and the tunefulness of the folk-song.

When we turn from the lyric which was written to be sung, to the lyric which was written to be read, we are at once confronted with the sonnet-sequences and the lyrics of the Miscellanies. The vogue of the sonnet in Elizabethan England synchronises almost exactly with that of the madrigal. Introduced into our literature by Wyatt and Surrey, it made little progress until the last decade of the century; then, after the publication of Sidney's *Astrophel and Stella* in 1591, it claimed the services of almost all the poets of the day, and, in spite of occasional protests, enjoyed an extraordinary vogue right up to the close of the century. It is unnecessary, after all that has been written about the Renaissance sonnet, to dwell long upon it here. In England, as in Italy and France, it is an essentially romantic and idealistic form of lyric. Of Provençal origin, it retains from first to last the spirit of medieval chivalry, the spirit of worship and service. To render the homage of pure adoration to her whose beauty has him in thrall, and to serve her

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with a loyalty which asks for no reward, is the paramount quest of the sonneteer from Dante to Spenser. With this spirit of medieval chivalry had mingled, from the time of Petrarch onwards, the ethereal aura of Platonic idealism, imparting to the lyric love a mystic rapture, and removing it yet further from sensuous passion and the touch of reality. In virginal purity, innate nobility, and soaring exaltation, there is no love lyric in the world which equals the best of the Renaissance sonnets. Yet it was this very idealism, and this aloofness from the world of sense, which, when the sonnet became the fashion of the hour, brought about its fall. It was easy for a Galahad soul like that of Edmund Spenser to scale the heights of chivalrous idealism, and to join with Plato in mystic communion with that Aphrodite Urania, who is

heavenly borne and cannot die,
Being a parcell of the purest skie.

But sonneteers of less ethereal temper, striving to soar with Petrarch or Spenser, and feigning a love which they did not feel, were only too often carried away, "ten thousand leagues awry," into the arid regions of false sentiment and rhetoric. The edicts of fashion made sonnet-writing a literary convention, and then the prostrate humility and despairing sighs of

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the poet-lover strike us chill, and we lose all sense of the individuality of himself and of the mistress whom he celebrates. From the first, the artificiality of the sonnet had been discerned and censured. Sir Philip Sidney, who set the fashion in England, and whose sonnets have more of the sense of reality in them than most of those which followed, was, curiously enough, the first to point out its unreality. Speaking in his *Apologie* of "that Lyricall kind of Songs and Sonnets," he says: "But truely many of such writings, as come under the banner of unresistable love, if I were a Mistres, would never perswade mee they were in love; so coldely they apply fiery speeches, as men that had rather red Lovers writings, and so caught up certaine swelling phrases, which hang together, like a man which once told mee, the winde was at North West and by South, because he would be sure to name windes enowe,—than that in truth they feele those passions: which easily (as I think) may be bewrayed by that same forciblenes or *Energia* (as the Greekes cal it) of the writer."¹ A few years later we find the witty young Templar, Sir John Davies, subjecting the practice of sonneteering to wholesome parody in his *Gulling Sonnets*; and when the end of the century is reached, we see how the fashion is passing swiftly away.

¹ *Apologie*, ed. Shuckburgh, p. 57.

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The lyrics of the Elizabethan miscellanies lack the definiteness of form, or even of theme, found in the lyrics of the madrigal-books and the sonnet-cycles. They are anthologies, formed by enterprising publishers at a time when poets set little store by the fortunes of their writings, and gathered from the romances, the sonnet-sequences, the song-books, and from whatever manuscript collections were accessible. There is, accordingly, great variety in the character and quality of these miscellany-lyrics, and in such a collection as *England's Helicon* (1600), we come upon many of the choicest flowers of Elizabethan lyric poetry. Delightfully simple and spontaneous, too, as many of these lyrics are, they are in the main art-lyrics, and have little in common with the folk-song. The miscellanies were compiled for cultured and courtly circles of readers, and it is worthy of note that, while the compilers often cast their net very wide, they set no store by the matchless song-lyrics of the dramas which follow the tradition of the popular melodies. Thus the anthology, entitled *The Passionate Pilgrim*, which the pirate publisher, William Jaggard, compiled in 1599, and fathered upon Shakespeare, contains the three sonnets of *Love's Labour's Lost*, but none of the snatches of song scattered through that and through Shakespeare's other early comedies. The ban of vulgarity which rested upon the autochthonous song-lyric during the

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closing years of the sixteenth century was not to be lifted by publishers, eager at all costs to fall in with the prevailing fashions. But if these lyrics of the miscellanies are a little artificial as compared with the wood-notes wild of Shakespeare and Dekker, they seem artlessness itself when set by the side of most of the sonnet-sequences and most of the collections of madrigals. In buoyancy and verbal melody, in the absence of intellectual strain and the perfect subjugation of thought to feeling, the best lyrics of Marlowe, Breton and Lodge have never been surpassed.

These lyrics are less dominated by foreign literary influences than the sonnet and the madrigal; yet, as we read them, we feel the presence of the Italy of the Renaissance. This manifests itself in the glow of romantic idealism with which they are suffused, in the pleasant garb of pastoralism which they assume, and in a certain innocent hedonism, which seems a little foreign to our sober English temper even in the heyday of the Renaissance. Varied in character as these lyrics are, the quality which is common to almost all of them is that of youthfulness. We have here the lyric of a nation in the first glory of adolescence, whose movements have an indefinable rhythmic grace, and whose outlook upon the world is untroubled by care or misgiving. It is a lyric which recreates for us

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the golden age long dreamed of by the poets of antiquity.

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove,
That valleys, groves, hills and fields,
Woods, or steepy mountains, yields.

Thus sings Christopher Marlowe in the exuberance of youthful ardour, and the strain is taken up by a whole chorus of poets, who sing because they must.

It is indicative of this quality of youthfulness in the lyrics of the miscellanies that the note of intensity is rarely heard in them. Occupied as they are with the all-absorbing theme of love, we look in vain for the poignancy and passion which appear, a few years later, in the lyrics of Donne. The lyric love is the creation of the poetic imagination, which never comes into touch with the hard facts of life, and finds utterance only in the golden world of Arcadian fancy. The proffered love may not find acceptance, but denial brings with it no sense of disillusionment, nor does the youthful idealism which inspires the lyrics to Phillida or Amaryllis ever stoop to mere gallantry. And with this lack of intensity goes also a lack of self-revelation. The poems of the miscellanies are lyrical by virtue of their tunefulness rather than by their power of disclosing the inmost recesses of the poet's soul. Seventeenth century lyrists, like

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Crashaw, Vaughan, Suckling or Herrick, whether their poetry be intense or not, stand revealed to us in what they write, but how little information do we gather as to the personality of Breton, Lodge or Barnfield from their snatches of song scattered through the miscellanies!

We have now briefly reviewed the leading forms of lyric poetry in England during the reign of Elizabeth, and have marked the decline of the popular song, with its simple melody and homely realism, and the rise of the art-lyric in the form of madrigal, sonnet, and miscellany lyric. In noticing these changes, we have seen how England has come under the influence of Italy, and have witnessed the triumph of a love lyric, somewhat diffuse in expression, fraught with pastoral fancies, essentially romantic and visionary, and, in its attitude towards womanhood, wholly loyal to the ideals of chivalry and the teaching of Plato. It remains to be seen what changes took place in the form and temper of English lyric poetry after the death of Elizabeth, and to what extent the influence of Renaissance Italy became subject to modification.

Even the most casual student of the social history and the literature of England must be aware that a change in the temper of the nation can be discerned soon after the death of Elizabeth. We recognise a certain coarsening in the fibre of the race, and a certain loss of

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national solidarity. This is not the place to analyse this change of temper, nor even, following the quaint methods of the author of *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, to lay our finger on its prognostics, symptoms and causes. But may not much of the inner meaning of the change be summed up in the philosophy of Feste, the fool: "Youth's a stuff will not endure"? Youthfulness is the prime characteristic not only of the lyric poetry, but of Elizabethan literature as a whole. It is the secret of the visionary power of that literature, and of that desire to reach beyond one's grasp, which finds characteristic expression in the dramas of Christopher Marlowe. When the seventeenth century opened, the Renaissance movement had still far to run; in some directions, indeed, the power of the ancient world over life and literature was only just beginning to be felt: but none the less we are aware that a conscious sobering of the national temper has taken place, and that the heyday of youth is over.

It is only natural that this change should manifest itself first of all in lyric poetry, for of all forms of literature the lyric is that which furnishes the most perfect mirror of even the most evanescent changes which come over a nation's thoughts and emotions. In lyric poetry we discern a change even before the end of the sixteenth century is reached. Already in the

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sonnets of Shakespeare we are aware that the power of idealism over poetry is on the wane; for his love sonnets are not like those of Spenser, nor even like those of Sidney. The wind of realism sweeps across them, and brings with it disillusionment and scepticism as to the worth and dignity of womanhood. The "dark lady" of Sonnets cxxvii.-clii. is no Madonna Laura, but a "woman colour'd ill." The poet loves her with a feverish, tempestuous love, which brings perjury of soul with it, and the betrayal of his "nobler part" to his "gross body's treason":—

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease;
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
The uncertain sickly appetite to please.
My reason, the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve
Desire is death, which physic did except.
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,
And frantic-mad with evermore unrest;
My thoughts and my discourse as madmen's are,
At random from the truth vainly express'd;
For I have sworn thee fair, and thought thee bright
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

As we read these burning lines, we feel that we have travelled very far from the pallid romanticism of Daniel's *Delia* or Drayton's *Idea*, or from the mystic idealism of Spenser's *Amoretti*. At the very time, too, that Shake-

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spere was writing these love sonnets, a younger poet, standing apart from the main body of Elizabethan men of letters, and content to lead a life of intellectual isolation, was deliberately making war upon both the temper and the form of the Elizabethan lyric. According to Ben Jonson, Donne wrote "all his best pieces before he was twenty-five," that is before 1598; and this statement has been accepted as substantially correct by Donne's biographer, Mr Edmund Gosse, and his latest editor, Mr E. K. Chambers. By his "best pieces," Jonson probably means the so-called "Songs and Sonnets," concerning which Mr Chambers writes as follows: "All Donne's love-poems—and the majority of the 'Songs and Sonnets' are concerned with love—seem to me to fall into two divisions. There is one, marked by cynicism, ethical laxity, and a somewhat deliberate profession of inconstancy. This I believe to be his earliest style, and ascribe the poems marked by it to the period before 1596. About that date he became acquainted with Anne More, whom he evidently loved devotedly and sincerely ever after. And therefore, from 1596 onwards, I place the second division, with its emphasis of the spiritual, and deep insight into the real things of love."¹

It is with the poems of the first division that we are concerned at present, for it is in these that

¹ *Poems of John Donne*, vol. i. p. 220.

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we chiefly see the warfare which he waged with the cherished ideals of the Petrarchan school of lyrists. In the poem, *Love's Growth*, he stubbornly refuses to rest content with the contemplative love of those sonneteers who wrote passionate centuries of love to an imaginary mistress :—

Love's not so pure and abstract as they use
To say, which have no mistress but their muse ;
But as all else, being elemented too,
Love sometimes would contemplate, sometimes do ;¹

and in his *Love's Alchemy* he avows the profoundest scepticism of that hidden mystery of love, first adumbrated by Plato :

Some that have deeper digg'd love's mine than I,
Say, where his centric happiness doth lie.

I have loved, and got, and told,
But should I love, get, tell, till I were old,
I should not find that hidden mystery.

O ! 'tis imposture all ;
And as no chemic yet th' elixir got,
But glorifies his pregnant pot,
If by the way to him befall
Some odoriferous thing, or medicinal,
So lovers dream a rich and long delight,
But get a winter-seeming summer's night.

Our ease, our thrift, our honour, and our day,
Shall we for this vain bubble's shadow pay ?
Ends love in this, that my man

¹ *Poems*, ed. Chambers, i. 34.

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Can be as happy as I can, if he can
Endure the short scorn of a bridegroom's play?
That loving wretch that swears
'Tis not the bodies marry, but the minds,
Which he in her angelic finds,
Would swear as justly, that he hears
In that day's rude, hoarse minstrelsy the spheres.
Hope not for mind in women; at their best
Sweetness and wit they are; but mummy, possess'd.¹

If love is without spiritual mystery, woman is
without constancy:

If thou be'st born to strange sights,
Things invisible to see,
Ride ten thousand days and nights,
Till age show white hairs on thee;
Thou, when thou return'st, wilt tell me,
All strange wonders that befell thee,
And swear,
No where
Lives a woman true and fair.

If thou find'st one let me know;
Such a pilgrimage were sweet.
Yet do not, I would not go,
Though at next door we might meet.
Though she were true when you met her,
And last till you write your letter,
Yet she
Will be
False, ere I come, to two or three.²

And if he finds women inconstant, he makes
no boast of constancy in himself:

¹ *Poems*, ed. Chambers, i. p. 41.

² *Song*, *Ibid.*, i. p. 4.

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I can love both fair and brown ;
Her whom abundance melts, and her whom want betrays ;
Her who loves liveness best, and her who masks and plays ;
Her whom the country form'd and whom the town ;
Her who believes, and her who tries ;
Her who still weeps with spongy eyes,
And her who is dry cork, and never cries.
I can love her, and her, and you, and you ;
I can love any, so she be not true.¹

The tone of these verses is unmistakable ; the philosophy of love is brought down from heaven to earth, and the senses are glorified at the expense of the soul. In many of his later poems Donne reveals a mystic temperament and indulges in flights of transcendental fancy ; but at this early stage realism is all in all to him. His attitude towards love and woman is not that of the cynic, for he was too passionate to be cynical ; it is the effrontery of youthful arrogance in a poet whose independent nature made him intolerant of subjection to conventional modes of thought. He saw the unreality of the Petrarchan school of poetry, and he turned contemptuously away from the pleasant fictions and mellifluous verse of the pastoralists. Shepherds and shepherdesses found no favour in his eyes, and his rebel genius refused to fleet the time carelessly in the bowers of a dreamy Arcadia. He took up arms, too, not only against the spirit of Elizabethan poetry, but also against its forms

¹ *The Indifferent*, i. p. 9.

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and modes of expression. Scorning the sonnet and all its kindred forms, he pours forth his emotion into moulds of his own fashioning, the metrical lawlessness of which has been the despair of most of his critics from Jonson onwards. His imagery is not drawn from the time-honoured stories of classic fable, but from the arts and sciences and the prosaic realities of his own generation. The *aubade*, the dawn-song of the awakening lovers, with its allusions to the lark and nightingale, was one of the most beautiful, but also one of the most conventional, forms of Provençal lyric, and is enshrined for ever in our memories through the use which Shakespeare makes of it in *Romeo and Juliet*. Donne also has his *aubade*: how far it is like that of Shakespeare, or that of the medieval troubadours, may be judged from the following verses :

Busy old fool, unruly Sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains, call on us ?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run ?
Saucy, pedantic wretch, go chide
Late school-boys and sour prentices,
Go tell court-huntsmen that the king will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices ;
Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.¹

The reactionary temper of Donne is seen again in the stamp of individuality impressed

¹ *The Sun-Rising*, i. p. 7.

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upon his poems. As we have already noticed, the impress of a salient, distinct personality is rarely met with in the lyrics of the Elizabethan miscellanies ; and the same is true of most, though not all, of the sonnet-sequence. Conformity to type is the general rule, and the difference between one lyrist and another is that of quality rather than of kind. With Donne all this is changed. His forceful personality is revealed in every line he writes ; so far from wrapping himself in the robes of convention, he likes nothing better than to stand naked and unabashed before his audience, displaying the working of every sinew, the flexure of every joint. His thoughts and emotions, his diction and his verse, are part of himself, and can never be mistaken for those of any other poet, either of his own or of another day.

The intellectuality of Donne, which so profoundly colours his style, and concerning which so much has been written, is only another aspect of his individuality and a further indication of his reactionary temper. The Elizabethan lyric is rarely packed with thought, rarely obscure. It often affects euphuistic phrases, but their meaning and relation to the main body of thought are generally apparent, and they have nothing in common with the ingenuity, the cramped and tortured style of Donne, when he is, as Coleridge puts it, wreathing "iron pokers into true-love-knots."

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The "wit" of Donne, the love of paradox and hyperbole, and all the *discordia concors* brought about by a perverse and restless ingenuity, are the qualities of Donne's poetry which have chiefly impressed both his disciples and his critics, and for this very reason it is unnecessary to dwell upon them here.

To what extent, and in what directions, was the influence of Donne's lyric poetry felt by the next generation of poets? In attempting to answer this question, we must first of all bear in mind the circumstances under which his lyrics came to light. They were first published in 1633, two years after his death, but we have abundant evidence that they circulated widely in manuscript copies during his lifetime.¹ Jonson's conversations with Drummond in 1619, and Carew's *Elegy on the Death of Doctor Donne*, assure us that Donne was a power in the land long before he passed to his grave, in an odour of austere sanctity, within the crypt of old St Paul's. Of his influence as a stylist, of his leadership of the "metaphysical" school of poets, it is unnecessary to add anything to what Dr Johnson and many later critics have said. Mr Gosse has traced the influence of this side of his genius upon Henry King, Herbert, Crashaw, and other poets of a later generation, and has characterised it as "remarkably wide and deep, though almost

¹ See Mr Gosse's *Life of John Donne*, vol. i. p. 79, vol. ii. p. 336

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entirely malign.”¹ But his influence reached far deeper than points of style. The lyrists of the generation which followed Donne differ from those of the Elizabethan era in nothing so much as in the impress of personality which is revealed in their writings. The Elizabethan lyric, as already noticed, is curiously lacking in this personal touch, but the contrary is true of that which followed. The Caroline poets, whether they pay homage to the sacred or the secular muse, are always individual. Carew, Suckling, and Lovelace, Herbert, Crashaw and Vaughan, have all left upon their verses the indelible mark of their own personality; we touch these men to the quick whenever we read them. The gay dalliance of the courtiers, their loves and their hates, and the spiritual struggles and religious ecstasies of the churchmen, are never concealed from view. And it was Donne who, breaking away from Elizabethan conventions, first imparted to the lyric this note of individuality, this lyrical cry of an intense and passion-swept soul. The influence of Donne is seen again, though here it blends with another influence soon to be considered, in the changed attitude of seventeenth century lyrists towards love and womanhood. The Petrarchan ideals, it is true, died hard. The Spenserian school of poets remained, on the whole, true to them; they come to light

¹ *Life of Donne*, ii. 329.

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again in the *Castara* lyrics of Habington, and appear, chilled and sere, in the *Mistress* poems of Cowley : but we look for them in vain in the great body of cavalier-lyrics. When Suckling writes :

Out upon it, I have loved
Three whole days together ;
And am like to love three more,
If it prove fair weather ;

or when Wither asks :

Shall I, wasting in despair,
Die because a woman's fair ?
Or make pale my cheeks with care
'Cause another's rosy are ?

we are at once reminded of the *Songs and Sonnets* of Donne. Even the gentle-hearted Browne, with all his loyalty to Spenser and the pastoral tradition, comes under the influence of the new lyric in the following verses :

Love who will, for I'll love none,
There's fools enough beside me ;
Yet if each woman have not one,
Come to me where I hide me ;
And if she can the place attain,
For once I'll be her fool again.

Potent and all-pervasive as the influence of Donne was upon the lyrists of the seventeenth century, it was not the only influence which made itself felt. Side by side with it, we can trace another influence, sometimes blending with

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it, but more often opposed to it—that of Ben Jonson, and through Ben Jonson, that of the lyrists of Greece and Rome.

Until the end of the sixteenth century is reached, the direct influence of the classical lyric upon English poetry remained subordinate to that exerted by the Italian; and the Italian lyric, although it delighted in allusions to classic fable, and took on at times a certain classic colouring, is in spirit and expression different from that of Greece or Rome. The Italian lyric, at least as far as it was understood and imitated in England, was permeated with the spirit of Petrarch; and between the *sonetti* and *canzoni* of Petrarch and the *carmina* of Catullus or the odes of Horace or Anacreon—to mention by name the three lyrists whose influence was chiefly felt in Renaissance England—there was very little in common. And when, with Jonson, a lyric framed on classical models arose in England, it was regarded, just as much as the realistic lyric of Donne, as a protest against the Petrarchan school of poetry. Jonson, so Drummond tells us, “cursed Petrarch for redacting verses to sonnets; which, he said, were like that Tirrant’s bed, where some who were too short were racked; others, too long, cut short.”¹

Until the advent of Jonson, the attempts to fashion a lyric upon classical models had been

¹ *Conversations with Drummond*, ed. Laing, p. 4.

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fitful and uncertain; and some at least of the energy expended in this direction might with advantage have been otherwise applied. At a time when the study of the classics was leading to an imitation of classic measures, we find attempts being made to write English lyrics in sapphic or anacreontic verse, wherein rhyme is ignored, and accent is made more or less subservient to quantity. Thus Barnabe Barnes includes in his *Parthenophil and Parthenope* (1593) two lyrics, both without rhyme, and written, the one in sapphics, and the other in anacreontics. Another lyric in sapphic verse appears in Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody* (1602), and one or two more among the lyric collections of Campion. Campion, whose attack upon the "vulgar and artificial custom of rhyming," in his *Observations in the Art of English Poesie*, is well known, is a singularly interesting figure in the history of the English lyric. His greatest triumphs are won in those songs in which he keeps most closely to the romantic Elizabethan manner; and in such lyrics as "There is a garden in her face," or the less known but almost equally beautiful, "Where she her sacred bower adorns," we still seem very far away from Donne or Jonson. Yet, side by side with these lyrics, we find others in which the classic style and the seventeenth century touch are unmistakable. And in this connection it must be

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borne in mind that Campion was a good classic scholar, and able to write Latin epigrams and lyrics with ease and fluency. Among his *Books of Airs*, too, appear free renderings of Horace's *Integer vitæ*, and Catullus's *Vivamus, mea Lesbia*, while yet another lyric, "When the god of merry love," recalls the manner of Anacreon.

It is a mark of Jonson's sanity of taste that, with all his classical bias, he never succumbed to the heresy of those who tried to substitute quantitative measures for the native principles of accent ; nor did he ever attempt to dispense with rhyme in lyric poetry. His conversations with Drummond inform us that, on this rhyming controversy, he had written "a Discourse of Poesie both against Campion and Daniel, especially this last, where he proves couplets to be the bravest sort of verses, especially when they are broken, like Hexameters." One or two of his lyrics, it is true, have a certain formal resemblance to those of classical poetry ; they keep, however, strictly to the accentual principle and admit of rhyme. Thus he furnishes us with an example, the first of its kind in English, of the Pindaric Ode, which Cowley would have done well to follow. It has the regular arrangement of strophe, antistrophe and epode, and was written in memory of "that noble pair," Sir Lucius Cary and Sir H. Morrison. Again, in the poem entitled *Eupheme*, he fashions a stanza

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which bears a certain resemblance to the famous sapphic verse, and in his translations of some of Horace's Odes he keeps as near to the rhythm of the originals as good sense and loyalty to native metrical traditions will allow him.

But the classicism of Jonson strikes much deeper than the metrical structure of verse; it consists, first of all, in imbuing his lyric verse with a certain classical colour, and secondly, in maintaining, in opposition to the romanticism of the earlier Elizabethans, a certain classical restraint, and a purity and precision of style. The classical colouring is most noticeable in the Masques, where Olympian gods and goddesses, together with Pan and his attendant Satyrs, occupy the stage, and pay graceful compliments to the British Solomon, his queen, and his courtiers. The popular song is here reserved for the comic antimasque;¹ the lyrics of the masque proper are invariably art-lyrics, full of allusions to ancient fable, and subject to the artistic canons of antiquity. Such, for instance, are the songs of Nature and Prometheus in *Mercury Vindicated*, the song of Pallas in *The*

¹ See the Ballad of John Urson in the *Masque of Augurs* :

Though it may seem rude
For me to intrude,
With these my bears, by chance-a ;
'Twere sport for a king,
If they could sing
As well as they can dance-a.

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Golden Age Restored, the song of the Muses' priests in *Love freed from Folly*, or the echo-song in *The Masque of Beauty*, where the allusions to classic fable are, after Jonson's somewhat pedantic fashion, carefully explained in footnotes. We miss in these lyrics the charm of spontaneity and the simple melody of the earlier dramatic song, but we cannot overlook the subtle effects of rhythm and the classic colour attained by the lyrist in such a song as the following :—

Apollo. Prince of thy peace, see what it is to love
The powers above !
Jove hath commanded me
To visit thee ;
And in thine honour with my music rear
A college here,
Of tuneful Augurs, whose divining skill
Shall wait thee still,
And be the heralds of his highest will.
The work is done,
And I have made their president thy son ;
Great Mars, too, on these nights
Hath added Salian rites ;
Yond, yond afar,
They closed in their temples are,
And each one guided by a star.

Chorus. Haste, haste to meet them, and, as they advance,
'Twixt every dance,
Let us interpret their prophetic trance.¹

A certain classic feeling is unmistakable, too, in Jonson's love-lyrics. There are not many

¹ Song of Apollo in *Masque of Augurs*.

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of these, and in the first of the *Forest* poems he furnishes us with his reasons, "why I write not of love." But on the few occasions where love is his theme—for instance, the two songs to Celia in the *Forest* and the ten lyric pieces, entitled, "A Celebration of Charis," in the *Underwoods*—we recognise that he is breaking away from the romantic pastoral manner of the Italian love-lyric, and drawing very near to that of the *Carmina* of Catullus or the Odes of Anacreon. The Celia songs, particularly the first and most famous of them, "Come, my Celia, let us prove," is directly based on the *Vivamus, mea Lesbia* of Catullus, and is a salient example of the change which came over the love-lyric in the seventeenth century. The Petrarchan sentiment, with its spiritual exaltation of womanhood, is no more present here than in the lyrics of Donne: in its stead we find, what Donne did not supply, the gallantry of Rome. The Charis lyrics are in the Anacreontic manner, but the general tone of the love-sentiment is the same:

For love's sake, kiss me once again ;
I long, and should not beg in vain ;
Here's none to spy or see.
Why do you doubt or stay ?
I'll taste as lightly as the bee,
That doth but touch his flower, and flies away.¹

¹ "A Celebration of Charis," vii.

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Jonson's classicism manifests itself, finally, in the artistic structure of his lyrics, and in the precision and lucidity of his style. "What vexed Jonson in the writing of the earlier Elizabethans," says a *Quarterly Review* essayist, "was its apparent amateurishness, its preference of ornament to proportion, its sins against the canons of antiquity."¹ He found the lyrics of the song-books and miscellanies diffuse in utterance and often deficient in organic unity, while the popular song, as practised by the dramatists, seemed to him crude and lawless. The abiding purpose of his lyric genius was to substitute for this older lyric, whether popular or Italian in origin, a new lyric, modelled on that of the ancients, fastidiously pure in style, and true to the highest principles of structural art. To illustrate the differences of style and structure between the lyrics of Jonson and those of most of his predecessors, we need hardly do more than quote the echo-song from *Cynthia's Revels*—probably the first lyric that he ever wrote :

Slow, slow, fresh fount, keep time with my salt tears ;
Yet slower, yet ; O faintly, gentle springs ;
List to the heavy part the music bears,
Woe weeps out her division when she sings.
Droop herbs and flowers ;
Fall grief in showers,
Our beauties are not ours :

¹ *The Elizabethan Lyric* (*Quarterly Review*, October, 1902).

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O, I could still,
Like melting snow upon some craggy hill,
Drop, drop, drop, drop,
Since nature's pride is now a withered daffodil.

If we compare this with any of the songs of Shakespeare, we must at once be conscious of the entire difference of aim on the part of the rival lyrists. Shakespeare places his whole trust in the tunefulness and spontaneity of utterance, and in the unmistakable wilding flavour, of the popular song, all of which Jonson is willing to sacrifice to his artistic conscience, and for the sake of formal excellence. The theme and the language of his lyric are alike simple, but it is the simplicity of the highest art—the art that conceals art. His song is a masterpiece of rhythmic subtlety, and though the conditions of the stage demanded that it should be sung, and set to a musical accompaniment, we feel that it is complete in itself, and that something of its verbal music must have been lost in the setting.

Other qualities of his classic style appear in the page's song from *The Silent Woman*¹:

Still to be neat, still to be drest,
As you were going to a feast ;
Still to be powdered, still perfumed ;

¹ This lyric is, however, no more original than "Come, my Celia, let us prove," or "Drink to me only with thine eyes ;" it is based upon a Latin poem by the sixteenth-century French poet, Jean Bonnefons.

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Lady, it is to be presumed,
Though art's hid causes are not found,
All is not sweet, all is not sound.

Give me a look, give me a face,
That makes simplicity a grace ;
Robes loosely flowing, hair as free :
Such sweet neglect more taketh me
Than all the adulteries of art ;
They strike my eyes, but not my heart.

Here, in accordance with the theme, Jonson chooses a less elaborate rhythm, yet the studied effects of art are no less apparent. The lucidity and precision of the words, the perfect balance of the one stanza with the other, and the epigrammatic close of the lyric, are all qualities dear to the poet's heart, and in perfect accord with his classical taste. In all that pertains to lucidity of style Jonson found himself opposed, not only to the Italianate ornamentation of the earlier art-lyric, but also to the metaphysical wit of his contemporary, Donne. Drummond has preserved for us his views on Donne's obscurity and his "not keeping of accent," and even the harshest of Jonson's critics must allow that he furnished in his *Forest* and *Underwoods* a wholesome corrective to the lawlessness of the author of the *Songs and Sonnets*. And as the century advances, it is interesting to note the clash of these two influences. The religious lyrists are, in the main, on the side of the metaphysical Donne, while the secular

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lyrists, above all Herrick, are chiefly on the side of Jonson ; but Carew, the greatest of these next to Herrick, is somewhat uncertain in his allegiance. His best songs have the courtly grace and perfect finish of Jonson, as, for instance, that beginning :

Ask me no more where Jove bestows,
When June is past, the fading rose ;
For in your beauty's orient deep,
These flowers, as in their causes, sleep.

But at other times the masterful sway of Donne seizes hold of him, and it is a fitting homage to that great lyricist that he comes nearest to his manner in the elegy with which he laments his death.

In the end it was Jonson who triumphed. The Restoration lyric—the songs of Sedley, Etherege, Rochester and Dryden—is the final expression of those principles of classicism which Jonson taught and practised. It is a lyric painfully limited in its range, and devoid of the imaginative power and genuine emotion which are essential elements in all great lyric poetry : but in its sense of design, the evenness of its structure, the avoidance of tortured phrase and harsh inversion, and, finally, in the purity and precision of its vocabulary, it remains true to the pattern set by that great contemporary of Shakespeare, who wrought the same revolution in the temper and

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form of our English lyric that Malherbe wrought in that of France.

It is unnecessary to carry this review of the Renaissance lyric any farther into the seventeenth century. Carew, Suckling, Lovelace, Cartwright, and their fellows, together with most of the religious lyrists, were junior to Herrick in point of birth ; and if some of them saw their works pass through the press before the appearance of the *Hesperides* in 1648, they were not before him in their courtship of the muse. Although akin to many of them in sympathy of taste, and pursuing with them a like end in poetry, he seems never to have come under their direct influence, and there is indeed no evidence that he knew either them or their works. In his lyrics he renders, as we have seen, full and frequent homage to Jonson, and writes a glowing eulogy on "Master Fletcher's incomparable Playes": at a later period, too, we find him on friendly terms with the younger generation of poets, including Denham, the younger Cotton, and John Hall of Durham. But there is no mention of the Cavalier lyrists of Charles I.'s time, and the silence is doubtless to be explained by the fact that, from 1629 onwards, Herrick, in the seclusion of his Devonshire parsonage, was out of reach of the Court and the courtly singers.

Before bringing this chapter to a close, it will be well to retrace our steps a little, and take up

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again the history of the various forms of song-lyric and reflective lyric which we have followed as far as the end of the sixteenth century. The popular song was, as we have seen, driven from its last stronghold, the drama, by the reforming spirit of Ben Jonson very early in the new century. In the plays of Fletcher, Middleton and Brome, we occasionally meet with songs which preserve the traditions of the folk-song, but the great body of seventeenth century dramatists followed the example of Jonson, and substituted for it an art-lyric more or less classical in spirit and style. Yet the seventeenth century had not proceeded very far before a revival of interest in the popular song began. In 1609, Thomas Ravenscroft published his *Pammelia*, a collection of rounds or catches, set to music, and distinctly popular in character. Here, for instance, we find such songs as "Joan, come kiss me now," "The white hen she cackles," and "Blow thy horn, thou jolly hunter." The collection was well received, and was followed in the same year by another, entitled *Deuteromelia*, and consisting of "pleasant Roundelaies, King Harry's mirth or freemen's songs and such delightfull catches." Two years later appeared Ravenscroft's third collection, *Melismata*, described as "Musically Phantasies, fitting the Court, Citie and Countrey," and including such popular airs as "There were three ravens sat on a tree," and "The frog he would

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a-wooing ride." How far this revival of interest in popular song proved creative, and how far it remained merely antiquarian, is, on the evidence before us, difficult to decide ; but the vast number of songs, of a more or less popular character, contained in the Pepys, Bagford and Roxburghe collections, bear witness to the fact that the popular song regained in the seventeenth century some of the popularity which it had enjoyed before the coming to England of the Italian song-lyric.

The Elizabethan madrigal, in spite of the presence of a new rival, lived on into the seventeenth century and retained a good deal of popularity for the space of nearly forty years. Michael East's seven collections of madrigals range between 1604 and 1638, and in literary quality rank above most of the sixteenth century collections. But the classical taste of the age has left its influence upon many of these seventeenth century madrigals. The Petrarchan mood gradually gives way to gallantry, or to the note of rebellion heard in the lyrics of Donne : at the same time we miss the Italianate graces of the earlier madrigal ; instead of these we meet with a greater directness of expression and a growing taste for epigram. This fondness for epigrammatic point is the extreme expression of that concision of style which is a feature of the Renaissance lyric from the time of Jonson

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onwards ; and it calls to mind the fact that many of the lyrists of the time—Sir John Davies, Ben Jonson, Herrick and others—were also writers of epigrams. The following madrigals will serve as illustrations of the new manner :

Your shining eyes and golden hair,
Your lily-rosed lips so fair ;
Your various beauties which excel,
Men cannot choose but like them well :
But when for them they say they'll die,
Believe them not,—they do but lie.¹

Crowned with flowers I saw fair Amaryllis
By Thyrsis sit, hard by a fount of crystal,
And with her hand, more white than snow or lilies,
On sand she wrote : *My faith shall be immortal* ;
And suddenly a storm of wind and weather
Blew all her faith and sand away together.²

Madrigals of this sort have much more in common with some of the epigrammatic verses of the Greek anthologists than with the kind of madrigal which William Byrd was setting to music twenty years earlier ; and we are therefore scarcely surprised to find in Orlando Gibbons' *First Set of Madrigals* (1612) the following adaptation of the famous dedicatory

¹ From Thomas Bateson's *First Set of English Madrigals*, 1604 ; quoted by Bullen, *Lyrics from Elizabethan Song-Books*, p. 45.

² From William Byrd's *Psalms, Songs and Sonnets*, 1611 ; *ibid.*, p. 72.

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epigram from the *Anthologia Græca*, formerly attributed to Plato :

Lais, now old, that erst all-tempting lass,
To Goddess Venus consecrates her glass ;
For she herself hath now no use of one,
No dimpled cheeks hath she to gaze upon :
She cannot see her springtide damask grace,
Nor dare she look upon her winter face.

The approximation of the madrigal to the manner of the Greek and Roman epigram may possibly be due to the fact that, as a pure lyric, it had to submit, during the later period of its existence, to the rivalry of the air or solo-song, which reached England from Italy just before the end of the sixteenth century. The air differed from the madrigal in several respects: the music was no longer polyphonic, but introduced a definite melody ; this, in its turn, led to the division of the theme into stanzas, the melody being repeated with each stanza after the manner of the popular song ; finally, the song was accompanied by music, the favourite instrument being the lute. This musical change brought with it a change in the character of the words set to music ; these no longer remained of secondary interest, but became once more, in Pindar's phrase, "lords of the lyre"—or the lute. The sole object of these composers of solo-songs, writes Sir Hubert Parry, "seems to have been to supply a kind of music which

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would enable people with no voices worth considering to recite poems in a melodious semi-recitative, spaced out into periods in conformity with the length of the lines or the literary phrases.”¹ The first collection of lute-accompanied songs was that of John Dowland, published in 1597. Many beautiful lyrics are found in this collection, including the familiar “His golden locks Time hath to silver turned,” and their literary quality is fully on a level with that of the miscellany-lyrics of the same date. Three years later, with the appearance of the *First Book of Aires* of Thomas Campion and Philip Rossiter, and Robert Jones’s *First Book of Songs and Aires*, the solo-song won for itself an assured place in the musical world of the time. Books of “Songs and Aires” appeared in rapid succession during the succeeding years, and the popularity of the solo-song was no doubt enhanced by the fact that it found a place in the masques of the court. The masque-songs of Jonson, to which reference has already been made, together with those of other masque-writers, were almost invariably of this character, and were sung to a musical accompaniment. As the century advanced, the old composers—Campion, Dowland, Jones, Ferrabosco—passed away, but their places were taken by a younger race, who

¹ *The Music of the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford History of Music), p. 209.

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followed in the main the same traditions, and included among whom were Henry and William Lawes, Nicholas Lanier, John Wilson, John Gamble and John Playford. This later generation of composers turned naturally to the songs of the Cavalier lyricists in their search for words to which to set their melodies. The extent to which the songs of Herrick received a musical setting has been indicated in an earlier chapter; and, side by side with lyrics from the *Hesperides*, we find, in the song-books of the period, frequent borrowings from the published works of Carew, Lovelace, Waller, Cartwright, Davenant, Randolph, Thomas Stanley, Katherine Phillips, "the matchless Orinda," and even Francis Quarles. The Cavalier lyricist who was most fortunate in securing a musical setting for his songs was Thomas Stanley. In 1656, John Gamble, the composer, published a collection of songs, entitled "Ayres and Dialogues to be sung to the Theorbo-Lute or Base-Viol"; this consisted of eighty-four songs and two dialogues, the words of all of which were furnished by Stanley. Mention has been made of these facts in order to correct the statement, sometimes made by historians of our lyric poetry, that the seventeenth century lyric was far less closely associated with music than that of the Elizabethan age. It is true that the Caroline era produced no Campion capable of setting his own songs to

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music, but an examination of the song-books of the two periods shows that the lyrics of Carew, Lovelace, Herrick or Stanley, stood as fair a chance of being set to music as those of Marlowe, Breton, Greene or Barnfield.

Turning, in the last place, to the lyrics which were written to be read, we notice, before all else, the rapid decline of the sonnet after the turn of the century. This has already been alluded to, and attempts have been made to explain the decline; the sonnet, alike in its temper and its form, was out of harmony with the spirit of the age, and it seems to have lacked the power of altering its character in the way that the madrigal did. Sonnets, and even sonnet-sequences, were written in the seventeenth century, but with the exception of those of Drummond of Hawthornden, who lived in a country which the flood-tide of the Renaissance reached very late, and those of Milton, which are a thing apart, they were the productions of obscure poets, content to keep to the backwaters of literary life. The last of the Renaissance sonneteers was Philip Ayres, who published a volume of "Lyric Poems, made in imitation of the Italians," as late as 1687. In his preface he finds it necessary to apologise for writing such obsolete forms of lyric poetry as sonnets, canzones, and madrigals; he is aware that "none of our great men, either Mr Waller, Mr Cowley

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or Mr Dryden, whom it was most proper to have followed, have ever stoop'd to anything of this sort," and that the success of Spenser, Sidney, and Milton as sonneteers is a thing which "cannot much be boasted of" (!) ; but he has followed the old manner because his genius has prompted him to do so.¹ The quality of this derelict collection of Petrarchan love-lyrics is, as may be supposed, not high.

With the decline of the sonnet-sequences proceeded, though in a less marked degree, that of the miscellanies. This, however, furnishes us with no evidence whatever of the decadence of this kind of lyric poetry. The poets of the seventeenth century were less willing to cast their verses to the winds than those of the preceding generation ; they preferred to keep them by them until the harvest was large enough to induce them to court publicity through the ordinary channels. And at the same time it is a mistake to suppose that the production of anthologies of lyrics by various poets ceased with the appearance of Davison's *Poetical Rhapsody* in 1602. Collections of lyrics and epigrams, hailing from various sources, appeared from time to time throughout the seventeenth century ; and among the most important of these were *Wit's Recreations* (1640) and *Musarum Deliciæ* (1655), which contained some of Herrick's jewelled lines, and

¹ Saintsbury, *Caroline Poets*, vol. ii., p. 269.

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the editing of which was in the hands of such distinguished persons as Sir John Mennes, the Commander of the King's Navy, and Dr James Smith, the divine.

What conclusion, then, can be arrived at as to the relation of the seventeenth century lyric to that of the Elizabethan age, and what reply can be made to those who bring against the later lyric the charge of decadence? It is true that we have yet to consider the work of the greatest and most versatile of Caroline lyrics, but we are, nevertheless, in a position to state that the lyric of the first half of the seventeenth century is not inferior to that of the second half of the sixteenth, but different from it. It is true that the later period has nothing to show like the great Elizabethan sonnet-sequences, and it is also true that, when we pass from Marlowe, Shakespeare, Breton, and Campion to the next generation of lyrists, we find an undoubted falling off in spontaneity and pure songfulness. But in the seventeenth century we have, instead of the sonnet, the great outburst of religious lyric poetry associated with the names of Herbert, Crashaw, Vaughan, and Traherne, and in no way inferior to the sonnet in soaring exaltation or mystic rapture, though the love which inspires these lyrics is directed towards Heaven and not towards woman. And if in the secular song

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there is a loss of spontaneity, tunefulness, and at times of idyllic beauty, there is an immense gain in all that pertains to art. A sense of form and of structure manifests itself; and the lyric, sacrificing romantic charm, wins instead a certain classic grace. Lastly, the seventeenth century brought to lyric poetry the sense of individuality, the personal note, the lyrical cry of a human soul amid its pleasures and its pains, its hopes and its fears. This was a new thing in our poetry, and it gives to the work of these Caroline lyrists a touch of modernity, a kinship with ourselves, which the Elizabethan lyric rarely possesses.

CHAPTER II

THE LYRICAL POEMS OF THE *HESPERIDES*

THE preceding chapter has been concerned with the main line of development taken by the secular lyric in England during the period of the Renaissance; and before coming to a study of Herrick's individual poems, it is necessary to determine the general relationship which the poet bears to the tendencies of his age. We have to ask ourselves, What was his attitude towards the popular song, and towards the various forms of art-lyric which flourished under Elizabeth? To what extent did he feel the spell exercised by the masterful genius of Donne, and how far did he conform to the classical traditions revived by Ben Jonson? Sealed as he was of the "tribe of Ben," we may well expect to find in his verses some trace of that reform of lyric art begun by Jonson, and continued by other members of the "tribe." Nor are our expectations disappointed; of all Jonson's disciples none accepted the lessons which he taught so completely as Herrick. The classicism of Jonson, consisting as it does in the



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expression of sound sense in pure language, and also in the absorption of much of the colour and atmosphere of Greek and Roman poetry, is from first to last the classicism of Herrick. And though the disciple was doubtless poorer than his master in the wealth of classical scholarship, we nevertheless feel that he moves among the great shadows of the ancient world, and arrays himself in their apparel, with more ease and grace. There is at times a touch of pedantry in Jonson, which suggests that he obtained his Roman citizenship with a great sum, whereas Herrick was undoubtedly free-born.

The classical qualities of Herrick's style must be reserved for later consideration ; what we are concerned with here is his indebtedness to Greek and Roman poets for ideas and lyric themes, and the readiness with which he enters into the spirit of classical poetry. And, at the outset, it may be stated that his classicism is, in the main, Roman and not Greek. He gives us, it is true, in his lyric entitled *The Cruel Maid* (159) a free rendering of a portion of Theocritus's twenty-third Idyll, and, as we shall see presently, he shows an intimate acquaintance with the Odes of Anacreon, and with some of the poems of the Greek Anthology ; but he borrows much more freely from Roman authors, and, what is still more important, the classic colour in which his

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lyrics are so often steeped, and the paganism which at times informs his verses, is that of Rome, and not that of Athens or Alexandria. The paganism of Herrick is one of his peculiar qualities. Jonson loved beyond all things to introduce into his lyrics some reference to ancient customs and ceremonial, to talk of Lares and Penates, or to call to mind some forgotten rite in the religious life of ancient Rome; yet we are never tempted to forget that he was an Englishman of the Elizabethan and Jacobean age, who satirised beneath classic masks the humours of London life, and engaged in wit-combats with Shakespeare at the Mermaid Tavern in Bread Street. But with Herrick the case is different. We feel that there are times when, poring over the pages of the Roman lyrist and elegist in the seclusion of his Devonshire cell, he shakes off the fetters of time and place, and stands before us as a habitant of that city which clung for so long to "the religion of Numa," and found a peculiar gratification in presenting its offerings of "holy meal and spirting salt" before the images of its household Lares and Penates. Herrick's allusions to these ceremonial rites are so simple and so intimate that they give to his verses something more than a merely antiquarian colour. His *Hymns to the Lares* (see Nos. 324, 333, 674) and *To the Genius of*

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his House (723) do not read like literary exercises, but like true expressions of his genuine faith. Some of these poems, moreover, were written in his graver moments, and at critical junctures in his life. When the call comes to him to leave Dean Prior, he seizes the occasion to address a poem *To Lar* (333):

No more shall I, since I am driven hence,
Devote to thee my grains of frankincense :
No more shall I from mantle-trees hang down,
To honour thee, my little parsley crown ;
No more shall I (I fear me) to thee bring
My chives of garlic for an offering ;
No more shall I from henceforth hear a choir
Of merry crickets by my country fire.
Go where I will, thou lucky Lar, stay here,
Warm by a glitt'ring chimney all the year.

Again, it is impossible to doubt that the verses which he wrote after paying a visit to his father's grave are both reverent and sincere ; yet what other poet could, with propriety, have introduced on such an occasion the mortuary ceremonial of ancient Rome, in the way that Herrick has done in the opening verses of this poem ?

That for seven lusters I did never come
To do the rites to thy religious tomb ;
That neither hair was cut, or true tears shed
By me, o'er thee, as justments to the dead,
Forgive, forgive me ; since I did not know
Whether thy bones had here their rest or no.

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But now 'tis known, behold ! behold ! I bring
Unto thy ghost th' effused offering :
And look what smallage, night-shade, cypress, yew,
Unto the shades have been, or now are due,
Here I devote.¹

Poems such as these bring home to us the conviction that there was in Herrick a curious strain of paganism, which accords none too well with his duties as a Christian priest, but which gives to his lyrics a classical flavour not met with elsewhere in English poetry.

But it is time to pass from this, and to come to a consideration of his indebtedness to the great classic masters of lyric poetry. Of the lyric poets of antiquity none made a deeper impression upon Herrick than that school of Alexandrian singers whose Odes are falsely ascribed to the Teian poet, Anacreon. Reference has already been made to the popularity with which the so-called Odes of Anacreon were received by Elizabethan madrigalists, by miscellany lyrists, and by Ben Jonson in those love-lyrics entitled *A Celebration of Charis* ; and this popularity increased rather than diminished in the Caroline age. It is uncertain whether Herrick read his Anacreon in the original Greek, or in the Latin version of the French humanist, Henri Estienne ; and except that it would be interesting to know whether he had a

¹ *To the Reverend Shade of his Religious Father* (82).

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knowledge of Greek, the point is not of great importance. But between the Anacreon of the Odes and the Caroline poet in his lighter moods there was undoubtedly a remarkable affinity of temperament. The gaiety and frank hedonism of Anacreon, his picturesque and dainty fancifulness, and his fondness for self-portraiture, are all qualities equally characteristic of Herrick. There are several references to Anacreon in the *Hesperides*, and in the poem entitled *The Apparition of his Mistress calling him to Elysium* (575), Herrick definitely recognises that between himself and the Greek lyrist there was a close bond of union :

And that done,
I'll bring thee, Herrick, to Anacreon,
Quaffing his full-crown'd bowls of burning wine,
And in his raptures speaking lines of thine,
Like to his subject ; and as his frantic
Looks show him truly Bacchanalian-like,
Besmear'd with grapes, welcome he shall thee thither,
Where both may rage, both drink and dance together.

The vision of an Elysium where Anacreon quotes Herrick, and Herrick Anacreon, is one which it is pleasant to linger over.

Among the *Hesperides* there are some six or seven poems which are fairly close translations of Anacreon,¹ together with others which, partly

¹ See, in particular, *The Cheat of Cupid* (81), *The Wounded Cupid* (139), and those lines *On Himself*, beginning "Born I was to meet with age" (519).

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because of the mood which they reveal, and partly because of the short trochaic verse in which they are written, he entitles "Anacreontic Verses." But the influence of the Greek lyrist is by no means confined to these; we feel it again and again in his sensuous love-lyrics to Julia, Electra, and his other mistresses, and in the voluptuous dream-fancies, such as *The Vision* (142) and *The Vision to Electra* (56), which are modelled on certain Odes of Anacreon, similar in conception and expression. Still keeping to lyrics of which love is the theme, we cannot fail to recognise that such a poem as that entitled *Upon the Loss of his Mistresses* (39), in which he tells the number of those conquests of which Time has robbed him, bears something more than an accidental resemblance to the thirty-second Ode of Anacreon, in which that lyrist relates what spoils he has won in the lists of love at Athens, Corinth, and amongst Carian and Ionian dames. Or again, if wine be his theme, it is still Anacreon that inspires the strain; his *Hymn to Bacchus* (304) and his *Canticle to Bacchus* (415) recall, both by their sentiment and their light trochaic verse, the manner of the Greek :

TO BACCHUS: A CANTICLE.

Whither dost thou worry me,
Bacchus, being full of thee?

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This way, that way, that way, this,
Here and there a fresh love is.
That doth like me, this doth please ;
Thus a thousand mistresses
I have now ; yet I alone,
Having all, enjoy not one.

Herrick delighted equally in that fanciful side of Anacreon's genius which fashioned cameo-like pictures of Cupid stung by a bee, or drawing his arrow upon the poet who has given him warmth and shelter. Not only did he translate these odes, but he contrived others similar to them in manner, and rivalling them in the dainty grace of the workmanship :

THE BAG OF THE BEE.

About the sweet bag of a bee
Two Cupids fell at odds,
And whose the pretty prize should be
They vow'd to ask the gods.

Which Venus hearing, thither came,
And for their boldness stripp'd them,
And taking thence from each his flame,
With rods of myrtle whipp'd them.

Which done, to still their wanton cries,
When quiet grown she'd seen them,
She kiss'd, and wip'd their dove-like eyes,
And gave the bag between them.¹

Finally, it seems to have been mainly from Anacreon, though the practice reappears also in

¹ No. 92.

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Catullus, that Herrick drew the idea of addressing poems "To Himself," in which, exactly in the manner of the Greek poet, he lightly discourses of his hopes and fears, his sensuous delight in the gay pleasures of life, or his presentiment of gray hairs and advancing years. How intensely Anacreontic, for instance, is the following :

I fear no earthly powers,
But care for crowns of flowers ;
And love to have my beard
With wine and oil besmear'd.
This day I'll drown all sorrow :
Who knows to live to-morrow ?¹

But while recognising the indebtedness of Herrick to Anacreon, it is important not to exaggerate it. It is in his shortest, lightest, and most sensuous lyrics that this influence is chiefly felt ; in his nobler and more sustained flights of song, he soars to heights where the Greek lyrist was unable to lend him guidance : the truth is that the whole of Anacreon is summed up in Herrick, but not the whole of Herrick in Anacreon.

Of the Roman lyric poets, it is Catullus and Horace that have left the deepest impression upon him ; he was undoubtedly familiar with their works, and translates from both of them. Lowell has called Herrick "the most Catullian of poets since Catullus,"² and it is incumbent on us to see

¹ No. 170.

² "Essay on Lessing."

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what truth there is in the statement. In that spirited poem, *To Live Merrily and Trust to Good Verses* (201), he empties his goblet in honour of Catullus, and refers to him as follows :

Then this immensive cup
Of aromatic wine,
Catullus, I quaff up
To that terse muse of thine.

His song *To Anthea* (74) is reminiscent in places of the most passionate of Catullus's love lyrics to Lesbia, *Vivamus, mea Lesbia, atque amemus* ; and his elegy *Upon the Death of his Sparrow* (256), though different in presentment, was undoubtedly suggested by the familiar *Luctus in Morte Passeris* of the Veronese lyrist. But the actual borrowings from Catullus are much slighter than those from Martial, Ovid, Horace, or Seneca, and indicate little more than that Herrick had read the *Carmina* and remembered them. Yet the relationship which the English poet bears to the Roman goes deeper than mere reminiscence of phrase. In the first place, it should be borne in mind that the *Hesperides* bear a striking superficial resemblance to the *Carmina* of Catullus in their apparently disorderly arrangement—an arrangement which ignores chronological order, and brings the loftiest strains of lyric song into close proximity with the coarsest epigrams. Penetrating beneath

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the surface, we notice the striking sincerity of utterance which characterises either poet; both of them lay bare their personal tastes, their loves and their hatreds, with absolute frankness. Herrick shares, too, Catullus's sympathetic nature, and his tender regard for friends and relations; either poet is ready at all times to devote his muse to the service of his friends, and is keenly alive to the sense of bereavement. Herrick's lament for the death of his brother William (186) falls, in passionate intensity, little short of the immortal lines in which Catullus bewails the death of his brother in the Troad.¹ There is, too, a resemblance between their poems on the side of style. Herrick shows his critical faculty in attaching to Catullus the epithet "terse," and the terseness of the *Carmina*, the directness of appeal, the avoidance of surplusage and of mannerisms, find their counterpart in the *Hesperides*.

But it is as love poets that Catullus and Herrick have usually been compared, and here, it must be confessed, the difference between them is great. In his love-poems to Julia, Corinna and the other mistresses, Herrick only on rare occasions glows with the same fiery passion which enkindles the Veronese poet's songs to Lesbia. The absence of passion on Herrick's part may be accounted for by the belief that he is singing

¹ *Carmina*, lxviii.

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only of imaginary mistresses, whereas we know that Catullus's Lesbia was luridly real; but, however explained, this lack of the genuine fire of love makes Herrick's verses seem very different from those of the Roman poet. We have only to compare the lines to Anthea with the fifth of the *Carmina*, on which, as already stated, they are based, in order to realise the difference between the love of the two poets. Herrick reproduces the somewhat fanciful lines—

Da mi basia mille, deinde centum ;
Dein mille altera, dein secunda centum ;
Dein usque altera mille, deinde centum—

cleverly enough :

Give me a kiss, and to that kiss a score ;
Then to that twenty add a hundred more ;
A thousand to that hundred ; so kiss on,
To make that thousand up a million.¹

But, unmoved by the passion and poignancy of the foregoing verses—

Soles occidere et redire possunt :
Nobis, quum semel occidit brevis lux,
Nox est perpetua una dormienda—

he substitutes for them some of his grossest lines.

Peculiarly interesting is the attitude of Herrick to Horace. What is probably the first poem he

¹ No. 74.
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ever wrote, *A Country Life to Thomas Herrick*, is singularly full of Horatian echoes, and shows the same delight in the associations of country life which we meet with in the Odes. A few years later, he translated the ninth Ode of Book III.—the dialogue between Horace and Lydia—and had it set to music. Throughout the *Hesperides*, too, and especially in the poems of a sententious character, we come upon passages, and sometimes short poems, which are little more than free translations of Horace. Thus he loves to round off poems by a passage taken from the Roman master, and generally acknowledges the debt by italics. For instance, the bold figure of the last line of *The Bad Season makes the Poet Sad* (612):

And once more yet ere I am laid out dead,
Knock at a star with my exalted head—

is an exact translation of the close of the first Ode of Book I.:

Quodsi me lyricis vatibus inseres,
Sublimi feriam sidera vertice.

Similarly, the concluding couplet of the poem, *To the Earl of Westmorland* (459):

Virtue conceal'd, with Horace you'll confess,
Differs not much from drowsy slothfulness—

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is an acknowledged translation of the following :

Paulum sepultæ distat inertiae
Celata virtus.¹

It is worthy of notice that Herrick turns to Horace for inspiration in his graver moments. The *Hesperides* bear witness to the fact that their author knew his Horace too well to fall into the common error that the Augustan poet was a mere seeker after pleasure, the bard of love and song and wine, who bids his readers enjoy the fleeting hours of present existence, taking no thought for the morrow. And it is significant that, when in the very highest spirits he writes *To Live Merrily and Trust to Good Verses* (201), and pledges in a bumper of wine the memory of Homer, Virgil, Ovid, Catullus, Propertius, and Tibullus, he makes no mention of Horace. In his Bacchanalian lyrics he looks not to Horace, but to Anacreon ; and when he celebrates in verse one of his many mistresses, he has in mind, not the love-lyrics which Horace devotes to his Lydia, or Glycera, but the Lesbia poems of Catullus, the elegies of Ovid, or again, the sensuous odes of Anacreon. To Horace he turns, as also to Seneca, in his graver moods, to furnish him with some sententious apophthegm, or to inculcate some of the more practical lessons of philosophy—mastery of self and a life of moderation. Such poems as *His Wish* (153), *Purposes*

¹ IV. Ode ix. 29.

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(615), or that entitled *Men mind no State in Sickness* (696), are clearly reminiscent of Horace, as is also that entitled *His Age*, dedicated to his friend John Weekes (336). In this last it is Horace's famous *Eheu fugaces* that inspires the song, together with the allied in spirit and equally famous *Diffugere nives* of Book IV. Nor can it, I think, be doubted that the noble poem, *The Christian Militant* (323), which is not unworthy of comparison with Wordsworth's *Happy Warrior*, is in its philosophy more nearly akin to the blended Stoicism and Epicureanism that we meet with in the maturer poems of Horace than to the ethics of Christianity.

If there was a kinship between Herrick and Horace in respect of their philosophy of life, there was also a kinship of tastes. Horace on his Sabine farm, and Herrick tilling his acres of glebe at Dean Prior, come near to one another in their surroundings and habits of life. Both had known the life of the court and the city, and both had followed up this life by one of comparative seclusion in the country, and had found in the activities and recreations of rustic life, and in the ever-changing face of Nature, matter for song. In the place of his seclusion Horace was more fortunate than Herrick; at such times as he felt the monotony and tedium of the Sabine farm steal over him, he could escape to Rome, or to fashionable Tibur or Baiæ, and there mingle

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freely in the society of the *litterati* and the courtiers. But Herrick, far away from London, and held fast by parochial duties, could not so readily pass from the one life to the other; and as a result of this we find, instead of the affectionate terms in which Horace always refers to his country life, those occasional outbursts of spleen against Dean Prior, of which we have already taken count.

But the point at which Horace and Herrick come nearest to one another is in the feeling that the work which they are doing, the monument which they are raising, is one which will outlive them. This faith in the immortality of poetry was, as literary historians have shown, common to most of the poets of the Renaissance. But it was in a very special sense the faith of Herrick, a faith to which he clung with a tenacity which no neglect could shake. The same faith was, of course, in Horace: it is the theme of the proud ode which closes the second book, and of the still prouder one at the end of the third. In his sure belief in the immortality of the *Hesperides* Herrick had Horace in mind, and the thought of that poet's fame, veiled for something like a thousand years beneath a cloud, and then effulgent in the stirring days of the Renaissance, when the dead came to life again, and old things were made new, may well have cheered the Caroline lyrist amid his work. The very

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language in which he assures himself of this immortality is a clear echo of Horace's *Non omnis moriar* and *Exegi monumentum aere perennius* :

Thou shalt not all die ; for, while love's fire shines
Upon his altar, men shall read thy lines,
And learned musicians shall, to honour Herrick's
Fame and his name, both set and sing his lyrics.¹

Behold this living stone
I rear for me,
Ne'er to be thrown
Down, envious Time, by thee.

Pillars let some set up
If so they please :
Here is my hope
And my Pyramides.²

Space does not permit us to investigate further the indebtedness of Herrick to the writers of the classic world. A large number of lines taken direct from the works of Ovid show his diligent study of that poet, and here and there we come upon verses which recall Virgil and the great Roman elegists, Tibullus and Propertius. There are, too, throughout the *Hesperides*, frequent reminiscences of both the tragedies and the prose works of Seneca, as well as of the historical writings of Tacitus. Indeed, the more carefully the *Hesperides* are studied, the more do they

¹ *Upon Himself* (366).

² *His Poetry his Pillar* (211).

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reveal the fact that Herrick carried with him to his vicarage at Dean Prior the best works of the great Roman authors, and that during the long winter evenings which he spent there, he pored over their writings with the eyes of a scholar and a lover.

His acquaintance with the lyric poetry of the Renaissance age was less profound. There is nothing to show that he had any acquaintance with the Petrarchan school of Italian lyrists who had inspired the poets of Elizabethan England. The reaction against the Petrarchists, begun by Jonson and Donne, was continued by Herrick. He has left us nothing in the nature of sonnet or canzone, nor is there much resemblance between his love lyrics and those of Renaissance Italy. Nor, again, can we trace in his works the influence of French lyric poetry; the lustrous names of the poets of La Pléiade seem to have been unknown to him. It would be pleasant to think that he had read Remy Belleau, and that the *Petites Inventions*, the lyrics and idylls of *La Bergerie* and *Les Amours et Nouveaux Echanges des Pierres Precieuses* found a place on his shelves side by side with the Odes of Anacreon. There was in fact much that was common to the two poets: both were lovers and imitators of Anacreon, who inspired both of them to write of love and of "times trans-shifting," and to weave delicate fancies round the minute creations

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of Nature. Herrick would have found pure delight in Belleau's beautiful song, *Avril*:

Avril, l'honneur et des bois,
Et des mois :
Avril, la douce esperance
Des fruicts qui sous le coton
Du bouton
Nourrissent leur jeune enfance. . . .¹

And the poet who sang of the hock-cart would have found a kindred soul in the author of *Les Vendangeurs*. Herrick's *Description of a Woman*, again, is strikingly like Belleau's *Portrait de sa Maistresse*, but there is no reason for suggesting imitation; either poet found his model in the twenty-eighth ode of Anacreon.

Herrick's attitude as a master of lyric poetry to the lyrists of Elizabethan England and those of his own generation is very interesting and calls for closest study. His classical sympathies and his sturdy allegiance to Ben Jonson made him turn aside from the dreamy mysticism of the sonneteers, nor could his mundane temperament appreciate the Platonic idealism of Spenser. But there was an undoubted strain of romance in Herrick's genius, while his long association with English rural life, and his intense delight in all the pagan ritual of the country-side, brought him into touch with the simple idyllic poetry of *England's Helicon*, and,

¹ Belleau, *Œuvres Poétiques*, ed. Marty-Lavaux, i. p. 201.

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in spite of his artistic tastes and classical bias, with the ruder minstrelsy of the popular song. Among the *Hesperides* are several songs of a distinctly popular character, and others which, if savouring more of the artist, keep, nevertheless, to the rhythm of popular song.

There were in the seventeenth century several songs which attained popularity, the hero of which was the roving, mirth-loving tinker. A song, entitled "The Jovial Tinker," is contained in the Pepys Collection, and akin to it is that beginning—

There was a jovial tinker,
Dwelt in the land of Turvey—

preserved in the First part of *Merry Drollery Complete* (1670). In the spirit of these songs Herrick wrote his *Tinker's Song* (1051), the popular accent of which is unmistakable :

Along, come along,
Let's meet in a throng
Here of tinkers :
And quaff up a bowl
As big as a cowl
To beer drinkers.

The pole of the hop
Place in the aleshop
To bethwack us,
If ever we think
So much as to drink
Unto Bacchus.

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Who frolic will be
For little cost, he
Must not vary
From beer-broth at all,
So much as to call
For Canary.

The rhythm of this song, with its alternating iambs and anapæsts, recurs in a good number of the songs of the *Hesperides*, most of which have a certain popular ring in them. We meet with it, or something very like it, in *Up Tails All* (727), which is also a version of another extremely popular song of the time, in *The Hag is Astride* (643), *The Peter-Penny* (762), *Ceremonies for Christmas* (784), *Draw-Gloves* (243), *The May-pole is up* (695), and in *Twelfth-Night, or King and Queen* (1035). The use of this rhythm for popular airs is fairly common in the seventeenth century, a good example being *The Encounter*, published among the *Rump-Songs* in 1662.

Again, Herrick's charm-songs have a distinctly popular flavour about them, and may be compared with those primitive charm-songs, "Against Stitch," "Against a Swarm of Bees," etc., which are among the earliest pieces of verse in English literature. In his charms he is content to ignore art, and to set forth the superstitions which he gathered in the chimney-corners of Dean Prior in the simplest possible manner :

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If ye fear to be affrighted,
When ye are by chance benighted,
In your pocket for a trust,
Carry nothing but a crust ;
For that holy piece of bread
Charms the danger and the dread.¹

This I'll tell ye by the way,
Maidens, when ye leavens lay ;
Cross your dough, and your dispatch
Will be better for your batch.²

Herrick never wrote anything quite like the songs with recurring refrain which we meet with in the plays of Shakespeare and Dekker, and which approximate so closely to the manner of primitive folk-song ; but his charms, his may-pole songs and wassail-songs, and his lyrics for Christmas and Candlemas ceremonies, come very near the folk-lore rhymes of the English countryside, and offer a pleasing contrast to those art-lyrics of his, in which the chief inspiration is drawn from classic sources.

When we turn from the popular song, and its allies, to the more formal art-lyric of the Elizabethan period, it is not easy to say precisely at what points Herrick came under the influence of the earlier masters. It may be taken for granted that he was fairly well acquainted with the collections of madrigals and miscellany-lyrics ; and when the authors of these

¹ *A Charm* (1065).

² *A Charm* (1063).

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sing of country life and country festivities, they come very near to Herrick. But the more artificial kinds of art-lyric, above all the sonnet and its kindred forms, were foreign to the taste of Ben Jonson's disciple, though the lyric of pastoralism, especially if written in amœbean form, was practised by him, as also by most of the secular lyrists of the time. It is significant, too, that whereas he makes frequent mention in his verses of the great lyrists of classical antiquity, and of Ben Jonson among the moderns, he does not once refer to Marlowe, Sidney, Spenser, Greene, Breton, Campion, Shakespeare, or any other of the Elizabethan masters of lyric song. Thus the reaction against the Petrarchan tradition of lyric poetry, begun by Donne and Jonson, is fully maintained in the *Hesperides*. Now and again, it is true, we overhear in that collection of verses echoes of the older music. Like many another lyrist of the time, he takes up the beautiful strain of Marlowe's "Come live with me and be my love" in his song, *To Phyllis, to love and live with him* (521), and rivals the earlier master in the idyllic beauty of the rustic associations which he recalls. Again, Campion's matchless lyric, "There is a garden in her face," with its refrain, "Till 'Cherry ripe' themselves do cry," is echoed in the familiar "Cherry Ripe"; and it is impossible to read Herrick's haunting "Mad Maid's Song" without thinking of Ophelia.

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There is, further, a certain kinship between some of the lighter lyrics of the *Hesperides* and some of the madrigal-songs, especially those which break away from the Italian manner and set forth homely themes in simple and homely words. Some of Morley's canzonets and ballets on May-day rejoicings, or on the rustic game of barley-break, come, in spirit and expression, very near to Herrick's treatment of the same themes,¹ and what is frequently regarded as the most perfect of all his idyllic songs, *Corinna's going a-Maying* (178), seems to have owed its inspiration to the following song from Thomas Bateson's *First Set of English Madrigals* (1604):

Sister, awake ! close not your eyes !
The day her light discloses,
And the bright morning doth arise
Out of her bed of roses.

See, the clear sun, the world's bright eye,
In at our window peeping :
Lo ! how he blusheth to espy
Us idle wenches sleeping.

Therefore awake ! make haste, I say,
And let us, without staying,
All in our gowns of green so gay
Into the park a-maying.²

¹ Compare the barley-break song in Morley's *Canzonets or Little Short Aers* (1597) (Bolle. p. 125), with Herrick's "Barley-Break" (101).

² Bullen, *Lyrics from Elizabethan Song-Books*, p. 198.

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It would be interesting to have heard Herrick's opinions on the poetic genius of Donne, with whose lyrics he was certainly acquainted, and concerning whom, we may readily believe, he exchanged opinions with his master, Ben Jonson, during their hours together in the London tavern. The direct influence of Donne upon Herrick may be hard to determine, and in many respects their poetic tastes ran in opposite directions; yet it must, I think, be admitted that the ever-present personal note of the author of the *Hesperides*, the individuality and direct manner of his lyrics, were all qualities which Donne had been the first to introduce into the Elizabethan lyric, and that without the example of Donne before him, Herrick would somehow have written differently. In this quality of self-revelation the *Hesperides* have much more in common with the *Songs and Sonnets* of Donne than with the *Forest* or the *Underwoods* of Jonson. At the same time, it is not easy to single out poems of Herrick which directly recall those of Donne,¹ and it must be confessed that the qualities which are most frequently regarded as characteristic of Donne's genius—his obscurity, his perverse ingenuity and metaphysic wit, his cramped diction and harsh rhythms—are directly opposed

¹ Exception must perhaps be made in the case of *No Loathomeness in Love* (21), which recalls Donne's *The Indifferent*; it is also probable that Herrick's *Litany to the Holy Spirit* (N.N. 41) was suggested by the *Litany* of Donne.

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to the lucidity and fluid melody of the vicar of Dean Prior.

Of English lyric poets, the only one that can be compared with the great lyrists of antiquity, in respect of the influence exerted upon the author of the *Hesperides*, was the one whom he so often and so loyally acclaimed as master—Ben Jonson. We can well believe that it was Jonson's precept and example that led Herrick to the study and imitation of the Greek and Roman lyric, that taught him structural form and precision of style, and that inspired him with his fastidious sense of artistic treatment. The classicism of Herrick is that of Anacreon, Catullus and Horace, but it is also that of Jonson, who overthrew the Petrarchan traditions and replaced them by those of antiquity. Moreover, it was allegiance to Jonson, reinforced, it is true, by innate sanity of genius, which kept Herrick free from all the extravagances of the fantastic school of English lyrists that was growing up around him. And in this respect it is to be noticed that what is almost Herrick's only mannerism of style—a certain love of inversion—is one which he shares with his master. Many a chance phrase scattered through the *Hesperides* is reminiscent of the *Forest*, the *Underwoods* and the *Masques* of Ben Jonson, and now and again we find him reproducing the music of his verse. Thus the rhythm—

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and something more than the rhythm—of one of Herrick's most perfect lyrics, *The Night Piece to Julia* (619), inevitably recalls the Song of the Patrico in *Gipsies Metamorphosed*. Jonson's song begins as follows :

The faery beams upon you,
The stars to glister on you ;
 A moon of light,
 In the noon of night,
Till the fire-drake hath o'ergone you ;

and this is the first stanza of Herrick's :

Her eyes the glow-worm lend thee,
The shooting stars attend thee ;
 And the elves also,
 Whose little eyes glow
Like the sparks of fire, befriend thee.

Reference has already been made (see page 32) to the relationship which the poem, entitled *A Country Life : to his Brother, M. Tho. Herrick* (106), bears to Jonson's *Epistle to Sir Robert Wroth*, and there is an equally close relationship between Herrick's *Panegyric to Sir L. Pemberton* (377) and Jonson's *Penshurst*. Both poems describe the hospitality of a seventeenth century country-house, and many of the ideas introduced into the earlier poem reappear in the later. It would be necessary to quote the poems in full in order to bring out all the points in common, but a few

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verses will suffice to show the dependence of the one poet upon the other. Jonson praises, amongst other things, the generous table kept at Penshurst :

Whose liberal board doth flow
With all that hospitality doth know ;
Where comes no guest but is allow'd to eat,
Without his fear, and of thy lord's own meat :
Where the same beer and bread, and self-same wine
That is his lordship's, shall be also mine.
Here no man tells my cups, nor, standing by,
A waiter doth my gluttony envy :
But gives me what I call, and lets me eat ;
He knows, below, he shall find plenty of meat.

Herrick takes up this thought and expands it at some length :

The wholesome savour of thy mighty chimes
Invites to supper him who dines ;
Where laden spits, warp'd with large ribs of beef,
Not represent but give relief
To the lank stranger and the sour swain,
Where both may feed and come again :
For no black-bearded vigil from thy door
Beats with a button'd staff the poor . . .
Thus, like a Roman tribune, thou thy gate
Early sets ope to feast and late ;
Keeping no currish waiter to affright
With blasting eye the appetite,
Which fain would waste upon thy cates, but that
The trencher-creature marketh what
Best and more suppling piece he cuts, and by
Some private pinch tells danger's nigh,

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A hand too desp'rate, or a knife that bites
Skin-deep into the pork, or lights
Upon some part of kid, as if mistook,
When checked by the butler's look.¹

Herrick's dependence upon his master is unmistakable, but it is only fair to notice the greater vividness and animation of his picture, and the way in which he has allowed his humour to play upon the scene.

Again, we may observe the connection between Jonson's famous song, "Still to be Neat," and Herrick's *Delight in Disorder* (83), where the younger poet, taking to heart the instructions of his elder, expresses his delight in the "wild civility" and "sweet disorder" of women's attire, and grows lyrical over tempestuous petticoats and ribbons that flow confusedly. But the dependence of Herrick upon Jonson is not to be pinned down to particular poems: it finds expression not so much in these as in the general tenor of his work. And when full recognition is made of his debt to the earlier lyricist, it is fair to add that at every point the disciple transcends the master. His range is wider, his taste surer; and whereas in Jonson we feel that we are in the presence of the intellectual artist and the verse-reformer, we invariably recognise in Herrick a quality higher than these—the genuine lyric

¹ The inspiration of both Jonson's and Herrick's poem comes from the fifty-eighth epigram of Martial's third Book.

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gift of one who sings because he must. Mr Swinburne, no mean admirer of Jonson's genius, has expressed this superiority of the pupil to the teacher in words which admit of no compromise: "As we turn from Gray to Collins, as we turn from Wordsworth to Coleridge, as we turn from Byron to Shelley, so do we turn from Jonson to Herrick; and so do we recognise the lyric poet as distinguished from the writer who may or may not have every gift but one in higher development of excellence and in fuller perfection of power, but who is utterly and absolutely transcended and shone down by his probably unconscious competitor on the proper and peculiar ground of pure and simple poetry."¹

The secular lyrics of Herrick are mainly concerned with what have been, in all stages of the world's history, the most cherished themes of the lyre—love and song and wine. In close association with these are his festival lyrics, written to honour the marriage ceremonies of some friend or patron, or in celebration of some village revel. Lastly, there are his nature-lyrics, inspired by the beauty and fragrance of flowers, or by the joy which possesses him when the dark winter is over, and spring returns to gladden the face of the earth.

Love is the supreme theme of the *Hesperides*, as of the Cavalier lyric generally, and to its pleasures

¹ *A Study of Ben Jonson*, p. 98.

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Herrick devotes some of his most perfect songs. Love is the theme of youth, but Herrick, if certain statements made by him in his verses are to be believed, remained constant to the master-passion until gray hairs were his portion and he had become a "dry, decrepit man." Marriage, as he tells us more than once, was never his goal, but in an age when gallantry was only too often a cloak for cynicism, he remained singularly loyal to womanhood. On rare occasions, and when governed by a fit of spleen, he gibes at the sex, but his habitual attitude is that which finds expression in the verses entitled *In Praise of Women* (739):—

O Jupiter, should I speak ill
Of woman-kind, first die I will ;
Since that I know, 'mong all the rest
Of creatures, woman is the best.

His loyalty and devotion, however, rarely attain to a very exalted level, and love is only too often mere amorous dalliance. If the tone of his love-lyrics is higher than that of Suckling and Carew, it is generally lower than that of Lovelace, whose songs are often inspired by a chivalrous regard of which Herrick remained throughout his life unconscious.

In his amours Herrick is a butterfly of not too fastidious taste. His mistresses are many, and he professes the same ardour for them all, and

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woes them all in the same language of cavalier gallantry. Love, he declares, dislikes nothing, and he elaborates this thought at some length in a leash of triplet verses :

Whatsoever thing I see,
Rich or poor although it be,
'Tis a mistress unto me.

Be my girl or fair or brown,
Does she smile or does she frown,
Still I write a sweetheart down.

Be she rough or smooth of skin,
When I touch I then begin
For to let affection in.

Be she bald, or does she wear
Locks incurld of other hair,
I shall find enchantment there.

Be she whole, or be she rent,
So my fancy be content,
She's to me most excellent.

Be she fat, or be she lean,
Be she sluttish, be she clean,
I'm the man for ev'ry scene.¹

The universality of Herrick's affections carries its own nemesis with it : with all his protestations of love, he remains heart-whole. Love, he confesses on one occasion, has scorched his finger, but has spared the burning of his heart. Thanks to

¹ *Love dislikes Nothing* (750).

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the delicate grace of his sentiments, the matchless lilt of his verses, and at times the idyllic beauty which suffuses his lyrics, Herrick occupies an exalted position among English love-poets; but his lack of genuine passion places him on an altogether lower level than that of Burns. For the chivalry of Burns's "O wert thou in the cauld, cauld blast," Herrick can offer only gallantry, and for the desolating passion of "Ae Fond Kiss," with its cadence of scalding tears—

Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met, or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken-hearted—

he can offer nothing at all.

Most of Herrick's love-poems are associated with the names of his many mistresses, of whose fictitious nature much has been said earlier in this book. Somewhat vague and shadowy as the Julia, Anthea, Electra, Perenna and the rest of the galaxy are when considered individually, they nevertheless conform to a type which is distinct enough. The mistress of the poet's imagination is a stately figure inclining to fulness, with red lips, sloe-black eyes, a clear voice, easy manners, and not too rigorous morals. She comes before us with her loose ringlets of hair flowing in the wind; there is a "sweet disorder" in her dress, and, as she passes, she leaves behind her

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a fragrance exhaled from all the perfumes of Arabia. The Herrick-mistress is Milton's Dalila, bearing down upon us like a stately ship of Tarsus :

With all her bravery on, and tackle trim,
Sails filled, and streamers waving,
Courtied by all the winds that hold them play ;
An amber scent of odorous perfume
Her harbinger, a damsel train behind.

The language in which he addresses his mistresses is often frankly sensuous, and sometimes gross. But this is by no means always the case ; there are occasions when, purged of all grossness, it acquires a delicacy and refinement rarely met with in the school of Cavalier lyrists. In such poems as the familiar *Cherry Ripe* (53), or *The Parliament of Roses to Julia* (11), or, again, *The Rock of Rubies and the Quarry of Pearls* (75), we still feel ourselves in the presence of the courtier, tendering the homage of gallantry, but how infinitely gracious is the tendering :

Some ask'd me where the rubies grew,
And nothing I did say :
But with my finger pointed to
The lips of Julia.
Some ask'd how pearls did grow, and where ;
Then spoke I to my girl,
To part her lips and show them there
The quarrelets of pearl.

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Gallantry, again, is the motive of the beautiful song *To the Western Wind* (255), written in honour of Perenna, no less than of that *To the Rose* (238), which associates Herrick with Waller, as his *Cherry Ripe* links him to Campion :

Go, happy rose, and interweave
With other flowers, bind my love.
Tell her, too, she must not be
Longer flowing, longer free,
That so oft has fetter'd me.

Say, if she's fretful, I have bands
Of pearl and gold to bind her hands.
Tell her, if she struggle still,
I have myrtle rods at will,
For to tame, though not to kill.

Take thou my blessing thus, and go
And tell her this,—but do not so !—
Lest a handsome anger fly,
Like a lightning from her eye,
And burn thee up, as well as I.

But there are occasions when gallantry, even of the most refined and exalted nature, fails to satisfy the poet. Once or twice in the course of the period during which the *Hesperides* were written, the fire of love, no longer content with scorching his finger, comes perilously near his heart, and then there breaks from him no felicitous compliment, but the passionate utterance of true devotion. In moments such as these he wrote

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his famous song *To Anthea* (267), the last stanza of which strikes deeper than anything else in Herrick :

Thou art my life, my love, my heart,
The very eyes of me ;
And hast command of every part,
To live and die for thee—

and the scarcely less perfect *Night Piece, to Julia* (619) :

Her eyes the glow-worm lend thee ;
The shooting stars attend thee ;
And the elves also,
Whose little eyes glow
Like the sparks of fire, befriend thee.

No Will-o'-th'-Wisp mislight thee ;
Nor snake or slow-worm bite thee ;
But on, on thy way,
Not making a stay,
Since ghost there's none to affright thee.

Let not the dark thee cumber ;
What though the moon does slumber ?
The stars of the night
Shall lend thee their light,
Like tapers clear without number.

Then, Julia, let me woo thee,
Thus, thus to come unto me.
And when I shall meet
Thy silvery feet,
My soul I'll pour into thee.

Not infrequently, too, and in poems which one is disposed to associate with Dean Prior,

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he introduces into his lyrics, somewhat in the manner of Spenser and Campion, a certain idyllic element. He paints for us pictures of country life, and places his mistresses against a background of spring flowers and rustic merriment. Most of his mistresses seem town-bred, frequenters of the court or the city, but in these idyllic lyrics they harmonise well with their surroundings, and appear never to have strayed beyond the parish-bounds of Dean Prior. The consummate example of this kind of lyric, and one of the most perfect things in our literature, is *Corinna's going a-Maying* (178), to which reference will be made hereafter ; and something of the same happy blending of lyric emotion and idyllic colour is met with in *The Wake*, addressed to Anthea (761), and in the Marlowesque *To Phillis, to love and live with him* (521). This is too long to quote entirely, and the opening verses will suffice to give an impression of the charm and virginal purity which characterise it :

Live, live with me, and thou shalt see
The pleasures I'll prepare for thee.
What sweets the country can afford
Shall bless thy bed and bless thy board.
The soft, sweet moss shall be thy bed,
With crawling woodbine overspread ;
By which the silver-shedding streams
Shall gently melt thee into dreams.
Thy clothing, next, shall be a gown
Made of the fleece's purest down.

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The tongues of kids shall be thy meat,
Their milk thy drink, and thou shalt eat
The paste of filberts for thy bread,
With cream of cowslips buttered.
Thy feasting-tables shall be hills
With daisies spread and daffodils,
Where thou shalt sit, and red-breast by,
For meat, shall give thee melody.
I'll give thee chains and carcanets
Of primroses and violets.
A bag and bottle thou shalt have,
That richly wrought, and this as brave ;
So that as either shall express
The wearer's no mean shepherdess.

The poems written by Raleigh and Donne on the model of Marlowe's famous "Come live with me and be my love" have each a strain of disillusionment in them ; but of this there is nothing in Herrick, who in this lyric to Phillis reverts to the early Elizabethan manner more completely than anywhere else in his poems. The picture which he paints is undoubtedly ideal, but it does not borrow its graces from an unreal Arcadian landscape ; the scene in all its details is true to an English country-side.

There is in Herrick scarcely a trace of the introspectiveness and love-casuistry of the Elizabethan sonneteers or the seventeenth century romance-writers. He does not reason with his love or diagnose it ; knowing nothing of the *carte du pays de Tendre*, he never encounters in all his voyagings the lake of Indifference, or finds

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himself stranded upon the reefs of Danger. All is smooth sailing in the wide ocean of his love, and it is death alone that bids him cast anchor. The thought of death frequently enters his mind when writing his love-poems, and he makes no attempt to put it aside ; so far from shrinking from the inevitable, he meets it like a voluptuary. He imprints his "supremest kiss" upon the lips of Perilla, bids Julia embalm him with the myrrh and spikenard of her breath, calls on Anthea to bury him beneath "the holy-oak or gospel-tree," and on Perilla to let fall tears and primroses upon his grave. He pursues these fancies even beyond death, and in his verses, *To his lovely Mistresses* (634), he bids them all come, on the anniversary of his decease, to his graveside, and pour forth their libations :

One night i' th' year, my dearest beauties, come
And bring those due drink-offerings to my tomb.
When thence ye see my reverend ghost to rise,
And there to lick th' effused sacrifice :
Though paleness be the livery that I wear,
Look ye not wan or colourless for fear.
Trust me, I will not hurt ye, or once show
The least grim look, or cast a frown on you :
Nor shall the tapers when I'm there burn blue.
This I may do, perhaps, as I glide by,
Cast on my girls a glance and loving eye,
Or fold mine arms and sigh, because I've lost
The world so soon, and in it you the most.
Than these, no fears more on your fancies fall,
Though then I smile and speak no words at all.

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The bulk of Herrick's love-lyrics are of a personal character, and, in his fondness for self-revelation, he shows himself a true child of his age. But, scattered through the *Hesperides*, are a few lyrics of an impersonal nature, and one to which may be applied the term, dramatic lyric. Following the fashion of the age, he wrote several lyrics in dialogue form, and bedecked them with the accepted graces of pastoralism. These are scarcely his happiest or most characteristic effusions, though they are superior to most of the amœbean verse that came from the pens of the Cavalier lyrists, and were set to music by Court musicians. The best of them is one which was intended for the royal ear, and in which the shepherds Montano, Silvio, and Mirtillo lament the loss of the shepherdess, Amarillis :

Mirtillo. This way she came, and this way, too, she went ;
How each thing smells divinely redolent !
Like to a field of beans when newly blown,
Or like a meadow being lately mown.

Montano. A sweet-sad passion—

Mir. In dewy mornings, when she came this way,
Sweet bents would bow to give my love the day ;
And when at night she folded had her sheep,
Daisies would shut, and, closing, sigh and weep.
Besides (ay me !) since she went hence to dwell,
The voices' daughter ne'er spake syllable.
But she is gone.

Silvio. Mirtillo, tell us whither.

Mir. Where she and I shall never meet together.¹

¹ *A Pastoral sung to the King* (421).

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The pathetic fallacy of some of these lines is in keeping with the general tenor of the pastoral dialogue, but the beauty and the grace are Herrick's own.

The finest example of the impersonal lyric in the *Hesperides* is *The Mad Maid's Song* (412), and it illustrates, amongst other things, his unerring taste. The mad maid had become an all too familiar figure in our literature from the time when Shakespeare had shown in his Ophelia the tragic pathos of such a character. Even so great a master of pathos as Fletcher had failed, in his conception of the mad gaoler's daughter in *The Two Noble Kinsmen*, to exercise that restraint without which the pathetic element in madness loses its dignity and panders to a degraded comic taste. In Herrick's verses we feel this restraint exercised throughout, and the poem, in its limpid simplicity and subdued but haunting tragic power, is the harbinger of Blake :

Good morrow to the day so fair;
Good morrow, sir, to you ;
Good morrow to mine own torn hair,
Bedabbled with the dew.

Good morrow to this primrose too ;
Good morrow to each maid ;
That will with flowers the tomb bestrew
Wherein my love is laid.

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Ah ! woe is me, woe, woe is me,
Alack and well-a-day !
For pity, sir, find out that bee
Which bore my love away.

I'll seek him in your bonnet brave,
I'll seek him in your eyes ;
Nay, now I think they've made his grave
I' th' bed of strawberries.

I'll seek him there ; I know, ere this
The cold, cold earth doth shake him ;
But I will go, or send a kiss
By you, sir, to awake him.

Pray, hurt him not ; though he be dead,
He knows well who do love him ;
And who with green turfs rear his head
And who do rudely move him.

He's soft and tender (pray take heed) ;
With bands of cowslips bind him,
And bring him home ;—but 'tis decreed,
That I shall never find him.

Whether Herrick, if the circumstances of his life had been different, would have achieved success as a dramatist, may be open to doubt, but the dramatic power of this lyric is undeniable.

To the pleasures of the wine-cup, Herrick, "the music of a feast," rendered, at one period of his life at least, unstinted homage. Bacchanalian revelry, one imagines, was not often his portion at Dean Prior, and we are, therefore, probably right in associating his *Farewell* and *Welcome*

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to *Sack* with his tavern-life in London at the feet of Ben Jonson. His drinking-songs are written with all the high spirits and abandon of youth, and in his lines, *To live merrily and trust to good verses* (201), he makes us feel that the wine-god is a ministering spirit to the muses. After drinking a health to Homer, Virgil and the Roman lyrists and elegists, he bids his hearers put their trust in poetry as the one power which shall outline the pyramids :

Trust to good verses, then ;
They only will aspire,
When men, as pyramids,
Are lost i' th' funeral fire.

His drinking-songs rise from the level of the ale-house catch to that of the ode. At one end of the scale we meet with such a lyric as that entitled *The Tinker's Song* (see page 223); at a higher elevation we come upon those hymns and canticles to Bacchus inspired by Anacreon and the epigrammatists of the Greek anthology, of which the following is a good example :—

Bacchus, let me drink no more ;
Wild are seas that want a shore.
When our drinking has no stint,
There is no one pleasure in't.
I have drank up, for to please
Thee, that great cup, Hercules.
Urge no more, and there shall be
Daffodils given up to thee.¹

¹ *A Hymn to Bacchus* (304).

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Highest of all stand the great *Farewell to Sack* (128) and *Welcome to Sack* (197), in which his genius takes a bolder sweep of pinion and soars to the exalted regions of the ode :—

O thou, the drink of gods and angels ! wine,
That scatter'st spirit and lust, whose purest shine
More radiant than the summer's sunbeams shows ;
Each way illustrious, brave, and like to those
Comets we see by night, whose shagg'd portents
Foretell the coming of some dire events,
Or some full flame which with a pride aspires,
Throwing about his wild and active fires ;
'Tis thou, above nectar, O divinest soul !
Eternal in thyself, that canst control
That which subverts whole nature, grief and care,
Vexation of the mind and damn'd despair.
'Tis thou alone who, with thy mystic fan,
Work'st more than wisdom, art, or nature can
To rouse the sacred madness and awake
The frost-bound blood and spirits, and to make
Them frantic with thy raptures, flashing through
The soul like lightning, and as active too.
'Tis not Apollo can, or those thrice three
Castalian sisters, sing, if wanting thee.
Horace, Anacreon, both had lost their fame,
Hadst thou not fill'd them with thy fire and flame.
Phoebean splendour ! and thou, Thespian spring !
Of which sweet swans must drink before they sing
Their true-pac'd numbers and their holy lays,
Which makes them worthy cedar and the bays.¹

There is nothing elsewhere in Herrick to surpass the sustained force and dithyrambic grandeur of this ode. It is not the utterance

¹ *Farewell to Sack* (128).

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of some reveller, staggering homewards at dawn from an Eastcheap tavern, but that of a myrtle-garlanded priest of Iacchus, son of Zeus and Demeter, chanting his pæan of praise in the solemn Eleusinian mysteries.

That Herrick, whose ear for the harmonies of verse was so acute, should feel and acknowledge the spell of music is scarcely a matter for wonder. He wrote several poems in praise of the art, and in extolling the charms of his mistresses, he esteems the lute and voice of "choice Myrrha" as highly as the wit of Corinna. He has little sense of the elevating power of music; it is for him a "care-charming spell," which calms his fever, and, coming to him in the form of soft Lydian airs, eases his heart of all pain. There is much beauty in his song, *To Music* (254):—

Music, thou queen of heaven, care-charming spell,
That strik'st a stillness into hell:
Thou that tam'st tigers, and fierce storms that rise,
With thy soul-melting lullabies,
Fall down, down, down from those thy chiming spheres,
To charm our souls, as thou enchant'st our ears;

but the most perfect of his lyrics in praise of this "queen of heaven" is that entitled *To Music, to becalm his Fever* (227):—

Charm me asleep and melt me so
With thy delicious numbers,
That, being ravish'd, hence I go
Away in easy slumbers.

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Ease my sick head
And make my bed,
Thou power that canst sever
From me this ill ;
And quickly still,
Though thou not kill,
My fever.

Thou sweetly canst convert the same
From a consuming fire
Into a gentle-licking flame,
And make it thus expire.
Then make me weep
My pains asleep ;
And give me such repose
That I, poor I,
May think thereby
I live and die
'Mongst roses.

Fall on me like a silent dew,
Or like those maiden showers
Which, by the peep of day, do strew
A baptism o'er the flowers.
Melt, melt my pains
With thy soft strains,
That, having ease me given,
With full delight
I leave this light,
And take my flight
For heaven.

In Herrick's *Argument of his Book* (1), prefixed to the *Hesperides*, the fair things of Nature and the associations of a country life hold a distinguished place. He begins :—

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I sing of brooks, of blossoms, birds and bowers,
Of April, May, of June and July flowers ;
I sing of May-poles, hock-carts, wassails, wakes,—

and proceeds to tell of dew and rains, groves
and twilights, and—

How roses first came red and lilies white.

The prominence given to such things in the “Argument” is borne out by the verses that follow. While still a London apprentice, he had, in the lines addressed to his brother Thomas, and entitled *A Country Life* (106), sung the praises of the “country’s sweet simplicity,” and drawn a picture of rural ease such as was in later years to become his own portion :—

The damask’d meadows and the pebbly streams
Sweeten and make soft your dreams ;
The purling springs, groves, birds and well-weav’d bowers,
With fields enamelled with flowers,
Present their shapes ; while fantasy discloses
Millions of lilies mix’d with roses.

In painting this picture, Herrick has Horace’s Sabine farm before his mind, but there is no reason to doubt the sincerity of his feelings ; and the charm which he finds at this time in the contemplation of a life of rural seclusion reappears again and again in the poems of later years. Herrick, as we have already seen, had his moods of petulance, when the life which he was leading

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at Dean Prior provoked vexation of spirit and he yearned with an exile's passionate longings after those splendours of Whitehall which once lay within his grasp. But the spirit of easy contentment which was his daily wear, and the unaffected delight which the quiet beauty of Nature and the festivities of the country-side awakened within him, were in the main sufficient to reconcile him for what he had lost.

His feeling for Nature was strictly limited, but genuine and even intense within its limitations. There is, as Mr Gosse has shown, no background, no sense of distance, in his landscapes. "He is photographically minute in giving us the features of the brook at our feet, the farmyard and its inmates, the open fireplace and the chimney corner, but there is no trace of anything beyond, and the beautiful distances of Devonshire, the rocky tors, the rugged line of Dartmoor, the glens in the hills—of all these there is not a trace."¹ One might even go farther than this, and say that only very exceptionally does Herrick give us landscapes at all. His usual plan is to single out some one feature in the scene before him and concentrate all his attention upon that, steeping it in airy sentiment and embroidering it with quaint poetic fancies. And when, as in the poem entitled *The Country Life* (662), addressed to his friend and patron,

¹ *Seventeenth-Century Studies*, Robert Herrick, p. 128.

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Endymion Porter, he spreads a wide vista before us, his method is to call up a succession of small pictures, instead of resolving these into one large, well-ordered landscape. This poem, which is among the most sustained he has left us, deserves to be quoted at some length, partly because of the resemblance which it bears to the contemporaneous *L'Allegro* of Milton, and partly because we find enumerated here most of the features of rustic life and scenery which made the strongest appeal to Herrick's feelings :—

When now the cock, the ploughman's horn,
Calls forth the lily-wristed morn,
Then to thy corn-fields thou dost go,
Which, though well-soil'd, yet thou dost know
That the best compost for the lands
Is the wise master's feet and hands.
There at the plough thou find'st thy team
With a hind whistling there to them ;
And cheer'st them up by singing how
The kingdom's portion is the plough.
This done, then to th' enamelled meads
Thou go'st, and as thy foot there treads,
Thou see'st a present God-like power
Imprinted in each herb and flower ;
And smell'st the breath of great-ey'd kine,
Sweet as the blossoms of the vine.
Here thou behold'st thy large sleek neat
Unto the dew-laps up in meat ;
And, as thou look'st, the wanton steer,
The heifer, cow and ox draw near
To make a pleasing pastime there.

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These seen, thou go'st to view thy flocks
Of sheep, safe from the wolf and fox,
And find'st their bellies there as full
Of short sweet grass as backs with wool,
And leav'st them, as they feed and fill,
A shepherd piping on a hill.
For sports, for pageantry and plays,
Thou hast thy eves and holidays ;
On which the young men and maids meet
To exercise their dancing feet ;
Tripping the comely country round,
With daffodils and daisies crown'd.
Thy wakes, thy quintals here thou hast,
Thy May-poles, too, with garlands grac'd ;
Thy morris-dance, thy Whitsun ale,
Thy shearing feast, which never fail ;
Thy harvest-home, thy wassail-bowl,
That's toss'd up after fox i' th' hole ;
Thy mummeries, thy Twelfth-tide kings
And queens, thy Christmas revellings,
Thy nut-brown mirth, thy russet wit,
And no man pays too dear for it.

The shepherd piping on the hill, and the wolf preying upon the flocks, are the alloy of pastoralism ; but apart from this the picture is faithful to English country life as Herrick saw it around him in Devonshire or elsewhere. Like Homer, he looks upon the fields with the eyes of a farmer as well as with those of an artist, and if the couplet—

Thou see'st a present God-like power
Imprinted in each herb and flower—

is suggestive of Wordsworth and modern pantheistic poetry, it is probable that what the

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poet had chiefly in mind was the primitive classic faith in the spirits of field and grove. Eminently characteristic of Herrick, too, is the prominence given to sports and pageantry, May-poles and morris dances, and all the swift succession of holiday festivals without which the country would have seemed to him a dreary place. It is worthy of note that this aspect of country life finds no place in the Horatian verses on the "country's sweet simplicity" which, early in his poetic career, he had addressed to his brother; and it would be pleasant to think that it was at Dean Prior that he was first initiated into the mysteries of may-pole dances, harvest-homes, and Christmas wassails. But whether it was here or elsewhere, their hold upon his affections was firm and enduring; and Puritanism, to him an accursed thing in all its shapes and semblances, could never have appeared so malignant as in the warfare which it waged with all this pagan ritual of the villagery. He never tires of referring to these merry-makings in his poems. In a number of short verses he describes with infinite zest the mystic ceremonies associated with Christmas, Twelfth-Night, and Candlemas Day; but it is the spring and summer festivals, with their open-air delights, which appeal to him most. The May-day rejoicings are celebrated in one of the most beautiful of his lyrics, *Corinna's going a-Maying* (178), a poem

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too long and too familiar to be quoted here in full, but from which the following stanzas may be extracted :—

Come, my Corinna, come ; and, coming, mark
How each field turns a street, each street a park,
 Made green and trimm'd with trees ; see how
 Devotion gives each house a bough
 Or branch : each porch, each door ere this
 An ark, a tabernacle is,
Made up of white-thorn neatly interwove ;
As if here were those cooler shades of love.
 Can such delights be in the street
 And open fields and we not see't ?
 Come, we'll abroad ; and let's obey
 The proclamation made for May :
And sin no more, as we have done by staying :
But, my Corinna, come, let's go a-Maying.

There's not a budding boy or girl this day
But is got up, and gone to bring in May.
 A deal of youth, ere this is come
 Back, and with white-thorn laden home.
 Some have despatch'd their cakes and cream,
 Before that we have left to dream :
And some have wept, and woo'd, and plighted troth,
And chose their priest, ere we can cast off sloth :
 Many a green-gown has been given ;
 Many a kiss, both odd and even :
 Many a glance too has been sent
 From out the eye, love's firmament ;
Many a jest told of the keys betraying
This night, and locks pick'd, yet we're not a-Maying.

English poets from Chaucer onwards have loved to “doon observaunce to the month of May,” but none has brought the once familiar scene so

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vividly before us as Herrick. The festival is presented to us in all its fresh grace and merriment, and the poet, realising the charm of the actual picture, makes no attempt to bedeck it with the false colours of Arcadian fiction. And when the promise of May has realised itself in the fulfilment of September, he paints for us, in his *Hock-Cart or Harvest-Home* (250), a picture of equal charm and animation:—

Come, sons of summer, by whose toil
We are the lords of wine and oil :
By whose tough labours and rough hands
We rip up first, then reap our lands.
Crown'd with the ears of corn, now come,
And to the pipe sing harvest home.
Come forth, my lord, and see the cart
Dress'd up with all the country art :
See here a maukin, there a sheet,
As spotless pure as it is sweet :
The horses, mares, and frisking fillies,
Clad all in linen white as lilies.
The harvest swains and wenches bound
For joy, to see the hock-cart crown'd.
About the cart, hear how the rout
Of rural younglings raise the shout ;
Pressing before, some coming after,
Those with a shout, and these with laughter.
Some bless the cart, some kiss the sheaves,
Some prank them up with oaken leaves :
Some cross the fill-horse, some with great
Devotion stroke the home-borne wheat :
While other rustics, less attent
To prayers than to merriment,
Run after with their breeches rent.

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And then there follows a description of the evening feast with its joints of meat, its dishes of custard and frumenty, and its copious draughts of "stout beer," pledging success to the farmer's life. The poem is dedicated to Mildmay Fane, Earl of Westmorland, and seems to have been written when Herrick was on a visit to one of the country seats of that nobleman.

When we turn from these scenes of rustic merriment to the pictures of still life, we are again struck by the quickness of his observation, and the charm with which he invests the objects of the natural world in presenting them to our notice. For the grandiose in Nature, the sublimity of mountain, moor, or sea, he has, as we have seen, no appreciation; but he observes the "mites of candied dew in moony nights," and the "frost-work glittering on the snow," and is keenly alive to all the sweet sounds and luscious scents of Nature, and to the ever-changing effects produced by light and shade. For him, as for most other poets of his age, winter is a season of death and desolation; his delight is all in what he calls "the succession of the four sweet months"—April, May, June and July—and he hails the return of spring with the simple, heart-felt joy of the mediæval Minnesinger :—

Fled are the frosts, and now the fields appear
Recloth'd in fresh and verdant diaper.

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Thaw'd are the snows, and now the lusty spring
Gives to each mead a neat enamelling.
The palms put forth their gems, and every tree
Now swaggers in her leafy gallantry.
The while the Daulian minstrel sweetly sings,
With warbling notes, her Terean sufferings.
What gentle winds perspire! As if here
Never had been the northern plunderer
To strip the trees and fields, to their distress,
Leaving them to a pitied nakedness.¹ •

Herrick is, however, seldom content with formal description. His instincts are not those of the descriptive poet, but those of the lyrist, and where he paints the face of Nature for us, he charges the scene with personal feeling and gives to it a human interest. Thus the two poems, entitled *To Meadows* (274) and *To Groves* (449), do not contain much in the way of natural description, but his imagination peoples these places with processions of fair virgins who have wandered forth into the meadows to fill their wicker-baskets with cowslips, or, like the lovers in Arden, to carve their names upon the bark, and bind fillets about the branches of the trees.

At other times he draws a veil of symbolism over the objects of Nature, and bids us see in flower, tree, or rainbow, emblems of things spiritual. The laurel tree is for him a symbol of the eternity of his poetic fame, the willow of love

¹ *Farewell Frost* (642.)

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unrequited, while the yew and cypress point
towards the grave:—

Both of you have
Relation to the grave :
And where
The funeral-trump sounds, you are there.

I shall be made,
Ere long, a fleeting shade.
Pray, come,
And do some honour to my tomb.

Do not deny
My last request ; for I
Will be
Thankful to you, or friends, for me.¹

Symbolism of this sort is but one particular form of that larger veil of sentimentalism, without which Herrick seldom cares to look upon the face of Nature, and which becomes specially prominent in the many poems written in honour of some particular flower. He loved flowers with no ordinary love, partly because of the sentiment attached to them, and partly because of the appeal which they made to his love of gay colours and sweet scents. Among the inducements which, in his poem, "To Phillis, to love and live with him," he offers to the fair one are chains and carcanets of primroses and violets, hills with daisies spread and daffodils, and honeysuckle bowers overhanging the stream ;

¹ *To the Yew and Cypress to Grace his Funeral* (280).

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and among the joys of Elysium which his sensuous imagination conjures up is that of sitting on primrose banks, crowned with endless roses, while

Naked younglings, handsome striplings, run
Their goals for virgins' kisses.¹

Even in his most riotous moments, when he drowns all sorrow in the pleasures of the wine-cup, he cannot be content unless his head is encircled with a chaplet of flowers.

The most beautiful of his flower-poems are those in which the note of lyric sentiment is uppermost, and in which the delight in floral beauty is chequered by a feeling of its transience. This is a familiar sentiment with most lyric poets, but none have felt it so poignantly as Herrick. He dwells upon this thought in a number of poems: even the sight of a bed of tulips is suggestive to him of mortality, he divines the end of all things in the drooping heads of the daffodils, and reads in the spring primroses, filled with morning dew, this lesson of sadness:

That things of greatest, so of meanest worth,
Conceiv'd with grief are, and with tears brought forth.²

The loveliest of his flower-songs is that *To Daffodils* (316), and here again it is the thought of their transitoriness which fills his mind:—

The Apparition of his Mistress calling him to Elysium (575).
To Primroses filled with Morning Dew (257).

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Fair daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon ;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attain'd his noon.
Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the evensong ;
And, having pray'd together, we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a spring ;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you, or anything.
We die
As your hours do, and dry
Away,
Like to the summer's rain ;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

Reference has already been made in the earlier portion of this book to those odes of Herrick which were addressed to such friends as Endymion Porter and Sir Clipseby Crew, and there is no need to say more about them here ; but one or two of his festive odes, in particular his Epithalamia, call for attention before this chapter is brought to a close. The epithalamium is one of the most characteristic forms of Renaissance lyric, and one which well suited the temper of Herrick's genius. Of classic origin, it came into being, lived, and died with the

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Renaissance, leaving behind a considerable body of verse, ranging from the gross *fescinnina locutio* of many of the Caroline lyrists to the spiritual ecstasy of Spenser's self-appointed wedding-ode. Herrick's view of marriage, it will readily be granted, was not that of the author of the *Hymns to Love and Beauty*, and his epithalamia are of the earth earthy. This, however, is partly explained by the lowering of courtly taste since the death of Elizabeth, and it is fair to add that the verses in which he celebrates the marriage of Sir Thomas and Lady Southwell, or that of Sir Clipseby and Lady Crew, are neither more nor less sensuous than those of the official epithalamium written by Donne in honour of the marriage of Frederick, Count Palatine of the Rhine, and the Lady Elizabeth, daughter of James I. The prototype of most of the Renaissance epithalamia was Catullus's famous *In Nuptias Juliae et Manlii*, and in his *Epithalamy to Sir Thomas Southwell and his Lady* (149) Herrick challenges comparison with the great Veronese lyrist. He fails to reproduce the rapture of the Roman poet's refrain :—

Io Hymen Hymenæe io,
Io Hymen Hymenæe—

but he comes near him in the stately structure of his lyric and in the grace of his imagery :—

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On, on devoutly, make no stay ;
While Domiduca leads the way,
And Genius, who attends
The bed for lucky ends.
With Juno goes the Hours
And Graces strewing flowers.
And the boys with sweet tunes sing :
Hymen, O Hymen, bring
Home the turtles ; Hymen, guide
To the bed the bashful bride.

Behold ! how Hymen's taper-light
Shows you how much is spent of night.
See, see the bridegroom's torch
Half wasted in the porch.
And now those tapers five,
That show the womb shall thrive,
Their silv'ry flames advance,
To tell all prosp'rous chance
Still shall crown the happy life
Of the goodman and the wife.

Move forward then your rosy feet,
And make whate'er they touch turn sweet.
May all, like flowery meads,
Smell where your soft foot treads.
And everything assume
To it the like perfume,
As Zephyrus when he 'spires
Through woodbine and sweetbriars.
Then, away ; come, Hymen, guide
To the bed the bashful bride.

Like Catullus, too, he loves to dwell upon the mystic ritual of the wedding ceremony—the anointing of the door-posts, the lifting of the

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bride over the threshold, the blessing of the sack-posset, and the scramble for the nuts scattered by the bridegroom—Catullus's *nec nuces pueris neget*.

Similar to this in general style, and excelling it in beauty of imagery, is the nuptial song in honour of his friend, Sir Clipseby Crew (283), the opening stanzas of which have much of the splendour and sustained harmony of Spenser :—

What's that we see from far ? the spring of day
Bloom'd from the east, or fair enjewell'd May
Blown out of April, or some new
Star, filled with glory to our view,
Reaching at Heaven,
To add a nobler planet to the seven ?
Say, or do we not descry
Some goddess in a cloud of tiffany
To move, or rather the
Emergent Venus from the sea ?

'Tis she ! 'tis she ! or else some more divine
Enlighten'd substance, mark how from the shrine
Of holy saints she paces on,
Treading upon vermilion
And amber : spicing
the chaft air with fumes of Paradise.
Then come on, come on and yield
A savour like unto a blessed field,
When the bedabbled morn
Washes the golden ears of corn.

CHAPTER III

THE NON-LYRICAL POEMS OF THE *HESPERIDES*

THE line of division between the lyrical poems of the *Hesperides* and those of a non-lyrical character is exceedingly hard to draw. The term lyric is at best vague, and, in the case of Herrick, the point at which the lyric ceases and the descriptive poem or epigram begins is often a vanishing point. Poems like *The Hock-Cart*—which is more descriptive than lyrical—were brought under consideration in the preceding chapter, because of their close connection with poems the lyrical quality of which is beyond dispute; and, for the same reason, other poems of the nature of lyrics find a place here. In the case of yet other verses, it is a matter of taste whether we regard them as lyrics or as epigrams; they are lyrical in that they express personal emotion, but their extreme brevity and lack of song-quality associate them with the epigrams.

The animation, human interest, and keen sense of observation displayed in some of Herrick's greater lyrics indicate that, had he cared, he

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might have won success as a narrative poet ; but he chose otherwise, and among the *Hesperides* he has included nothing in the nature of pure narrative work. In preferring the lyric to the merely descriptive poem, he certainly showed his wisdom ; for mere description, without the thrill of lyric emotion, only too often leaves us cold. At the same time, there is in his collection of secular verse a small group of poems mainly descriptive in character : these are his fairy-poems, and to these our attention must now be turned.

There is no absolute certainty as to the period at which Herrick's three chief fairy-poems—*The Fairy Temple or Oberon's Chapel*, *Oberon's Feast*, and *Oberon's Palace* — were written, but the probability is that they belong to the years which preceded his settlement at Dean Prior. An earlier and briefer version of the *Feast* was published in 1635, in a little volume of fairy-poems, entitled "A Description of the King and Queen of Fairies, Their habit, fare, their abode, pomp and state," and would thus seem to have been the first of Herrick's poems to pass through the printer's hands. This little book of twelve pages also contained a poem entitled "A Description of the King of Fairies' Clothes, brought to him on New-Year's day in the morning, 1626 [N.S. 1627]," by that Cambridgeshire knight, Sir



DEAN BURN

Non-Lyrical Poems of the *Hesperides*

Simon Steward, to whom Herrick on one occasion sent a string of verses telling of Christmas sports and Twelfth-Night mirth. Now this poem of Steward's is, in conception and workmanship, singularly like the fairy-poems of Herrick ; and without going as far as Mr W. C. Hazlitt, who would have us regard Steward as the mere copyist and Herrick as the author of the poem in question, we may assume that Steward wrote these verses under his friend's direction, or perhaps with his friend's poems spread out before him. A couplet of Steward's poem—

About his neck a wreath of pearl
Dropp'd from the eyes of some poor girl—

is almost certainly a reminiscence of the following verses from *Oberon's Palace* (444) :

And, all behung with these, pure pearls
Dropp'd from the eyes of ravish'd girls ;

and throughout one may observe a deliberate, though skilful, imitation of Herrick's manner. Steward's poem, then, which must have been written some time before New-Year's day, 1627, helps us to determine the date of Herrick's fairy-poems sufficiently exactly, and more precise evidence is furnished by one of the poems themselves. Describing the religion of the

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fairies in *The Fairy Temple or Oberon's Chapel* (223), he says—

They have their ash-pans and their brooms
To purge the chapel and the rooms ;
Their many mumbling mass-priests here,
And many a dapper chorister,
Their ush'ring vergers, here likewise
Their canons and their chanteries
Of cloister-monks they have enow,
Aye, and their abbey-lubbers too ;
And if their legend do not lie,
They much affect the papacy.
And since the last is dead, there's hope
Elf Boniface shall next be pope.

The words which I have italicised seem to point to an historic fact—the recent death of one of the Popes ; and unless we refer the composition of this poem to so late a date as 1644, when Urban VIII. died, the Pope in question must be either Paul V., who died in 1621, or his successor, Gregory XV., who died in 1623.

This question of date has been discussed at some length, first because so few of Herrick's poems yield any evidence of this sort, and second, because the determination of a date between 1620 and 1630 connects these fairy-poems of the *Hesperides* with a prevailing fashion. Fairy-lore, as Joseph Ritson long since pointed out, finds a place in English poetry already in medieval times, but it was the Elizabethans, and above all Shakespeare, who first fully realised its

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romantic charm. The fairies of Shakespeare differ from those of Herrick in many ways, but especially in this, that although imbued with the warm colours of poetic fancy, they remain true to their popular origin, and are brought into intimate relationship with human affairs. They are the fairies of rustic superstition, diminutive beings who lurk in acorn-cups and hazel-nuts, and who, loving mischief and hating sluttishness, gallop through the brains of sleeping lovers, beguile old gossips and bean-fed horses, and pinch as blue as bilberry the maids who have left their fires unraked and their hearths unswept. Thus at every point his fairy-world is made to converge upon that of mortal men. The fairies of Jonson's masques have the same intimate concern with human affairs and the same delight in mischief-making; but he insists less upon their diminutive stature, and, while keeping the background of rustic superstition, also contrives to introduce a certain amount of classic colouring, and associates his native elves with the fauns and satyrs of ancient mythology. In the next generation this poetic handling of fairy-lore underwent further modification, and between the years 1620 and 1630 there arose a considerable mass of fairy-poetry which, under the forms of epic, lyric, and descriptive verse, attracted the attention not only of young men like Herrick, but also of such a veteran as Michael Drayton.

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Within this decade were written Drayton's *Nymphidia* and *A Fairy Wedding*, the three fairy-poems of Herrick, the detailed account of the fairies' feasts and sports in the third book of William Browne's *Britannia's Pastorals*, the contributions of Steward and other anonymous writers to the little fairy-volume of 1635, together with various other verses of this sort, found among the manuscripts of the period. The fairy-kingdom which is revealed to us in all these poems is the pure creation of ingenious wit, and its inhabitants are, in the words of Mercutio,

the children of an idle dream,
Begot of nothing but pure fantasy.

The connection between these fairy-poems and popular folk-lore is somewhat slender, and nowhere is the fairy-world brought into touch with the lives of men and women. Drawing their inspiration from Shakespeare, above all from Mercutio's description of Queen Mab in *Romeo and Juliet*, the authors seized upon Shakespeare's representation of the diminutive size of the fairies, and taxed their ingenuity to the utmost in fashioning a fairy-world on a Lilliputian scale, and in observing a nice sense of proportion between the various parts. These poems are almost entirely lacking in those finer elements of romance with which Shakespeare has invested his elves, and the complete detachment of this

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fairy-world from the affairs of mortal men checks at its source the outflow of that delicate humour which, in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, springs from the contemplation of human life through the eyes of beings who live upon a different plane from that of common mortality. Drayton, it is true, atones, in his *Nymphidia*, for this lack of humour by the skiful use of the mock-heroic, but in this he stands alone. These fairy-poems are, therefore, triumphs of ingenious fancy, but little else.

It can readily be imagined that the production of poems of this character proved a congenial task for a man of Herrick's temper. The lightness of his touch enabled him to tread easily along this gossamer track; and, keeping closely within the bounds of descriptive verse, he threw off fairy-poems which exhibit nimbleness of fancy, sharpness of outline, and a nice sense of proportion in miniature. At times, too, nobler qualities reveal themselves, as when, for instance, describing the grove of Oberon, he writes—

Sweet airs move here, and more divine,
Made by the breath of great-eyed kine,
Who, as they low, impearl with milk
The four-leaved grass, or moss like silk.¹

Or again, in his description of the altar in *Oberon's Chapel* (223)—

¹ *Oberon's Palace* (444).

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The fringe that circumbinds it, too,
Is spangle-work of trembling dew ;
Which, gently gleaming, makes a show
Like frost-work glitt'ring on the snow.

But full of charm as these Oberon verses are, we must regard them as so many oblations to a passing literary cult, rather than as transcripts of the poet's impressions of rustic superstition and ceremonial. Scattered through the *Hesperides*, however, are a number of other poems dealing with fairy- and folk-lore, which bring us much nearer to the life of the time and the imaginings of a rural community. Thus the swift anapæstic verses in which Herrick describes the night-hag stand out in bold contrast to the thin-spun fancies of the fairy-poems :—

The hag is astride
This night for to ride,
The devil and she together ;
Through thick and through thin
Now out and then in,
Though ne'er so foul be the weather.

A thorn or a burr
She takes for a spur,
With a lash of a bramble she rides now ;
Through brakes and through briars,
O'er ditches and mires,
She follows the spirit that guides now.

No beast for his food
Dare now range the wood,

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But hush'd in his lair he lies lurking ;
While mischiefs, by these,
On land and on seas,
At noon of night are a-working.

The storm will arise
And trouble the skies ;
This night, and more for the wonder,
The ghost from the tomb
Affrighted shall come,
Call'd out by the clap of the thunder.¹

Here we are face to face with the darker and more malignant forces of the spirit-world, and Herrick makes us realise the baneful influence of the night-hag, and her league with the powers of darkness, as surely as Shakespeare does in the portrayal of his weird sisters.

Herrick has left no poems which treat of the famous fairy- or pixy-lore of the Dartmoor villages, but many of his verses recording country superstitions and ceremonies have a close connection with Devonshire customs, and belong, beyond a doubt, to the time of his residence at Dean Prior. There, for instance, must have been written his verses on the Christmas ceremony for the fertilisation of the fruit trees—

Wassail the trees that they may bear
You many a plum and many a pear :
For more or less fruits they will bring
As you do give them wassailing.²

s ¹ *The Hag* (643).

² *A Charm* (787).

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The ceremony here referred to, that of firing shot from a gun into the branches of the fruit-trees at Christmastide, has lingered on in the neighbourhood of Dean Prior down to the present day.

Mingling freely with his Devonshire parishioners in all the homely details of their lives, Herrick finds an especial delight in the ceremonious ritual with which they propitiated the occult powers of Nature, and has enshrined much of this ritual in his verses. Through these we learn much concerning the customs and ceremonies which were observed on such high festivals as Christmas and Candlemas-eve, Twelfth Night and St Distaff's Day. A certain direct homeliness characterises all these ceremonial verses, and they make us realise that the poet, during his long residence in the west-country village, had sent his roots deep down into the soil of rural England. The following verses written for *Saint Distaff's Day, or the Morrow after Twelfth Day* (1026) have something of the raciness of Burns's *Halloween* :—

Partly work and partly play
Ye must on S. Distaff's Day :
From the plough soon free your team,
Then come home and fodder them.
If the maids a-spinning go,
Burn the flax and fire the tow ;
Scorch their plackets, but beware
That ye singe no maidenhair.

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Bring in pails of water, then,
Let the maids bewash the men.
Give S. Distaff all the right ;
Then bid Christmas sport good-night ;
And next morrow every one
To his own vocation.

Akin to these ceremonial verses are the charm-poems which lie scattered through the pages of the *Hesperides*. These not only serve to associate their author with the simple faiths and superstitions of rural England, but, as stated before, they connect him with one of the most primitive forms of English verse. His charms to allay love (587), to make the bread rise (1063), to bring in the witch (890), or to secure stables against the malice of the night-hag (891), are all of this character, and show that English folk-lore and pagan ritual appealed to him no less strongly than the ceremonial customs of ancient Rome.

It is the custom to regard Herrick's epigrams as obnoxious tares sown by him in unguarded moments among the good red wheat of his garden ; and Mr Pollard, in his edition of the *Hesperides*, has seen fit to root up these tares and cast them into an appendix by themselves. If by an epigram is meant simply a distich of scurrilous verse, conceived in the worst manner of Martial, and directed against some hapless wretch who has goaded the poet to sting, it

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would be desirable to pass by the epigrams of the *Hesperides* in silence. But if we use the word in the Greek rather than the Roman sense, and consider an epigram as a terse, highly compressed and delicately finished poem which does not necessarily aim at satiric point, then, so far from dismissing Herrick's epigrams as garbage, we must regard him as one of the greatest masters of the epigrammatic art, and as the only English poet who can bear comparison with the epigrammatists of the Greek Anthology.

It can hardly be doubted that Herrick himself used the word epigram in the Roman and modern sense, or that he would have accepted Boileau's definition of it as "un bon mot de deux rimes orné," or, again, that of the English wit who wrote the following :—

The qualities rare in a bee that we meet
In an epigram never should fail ;
The body should always be little and sweet,
And a sting should be left in its tail.

To the titles of many of those verses of his which come under this definition he adds himself the word "epigram,"¹ and fails to add it to those *épigrammes à la grecque* which, in number as in poetic quality, far exceed the satiric verses directed against some offending person at Dean

¹ Two instances out of many are *Upon Adam Peapes: Epig.* (835), and *Upon Hanch a Schoolmaster: Epig.* (842).

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Prior or elsewhere. But this should not prevent us from applying the term to those exquisite cameos of verse—epitaphs, gnomic verses, short complimentary poems, prayers and dedications to pagan deities—which are too brief to be called lyrics, and which, as already stated, conform so closely to the manner of the Greek epigram.

Before coming to a study of these, it is necessary to say something about epigram-writing in England in the preceding age. The epigram, like many another literary form, sprang into being through the contact of the modern with the ancient world at the time of the Renaissance. Then it was that the Roman epigrammatists, in particular the greatest of them, Martial, came to be read and imitated; and with them the Greek epigrammatists, whose poems were made accessible through the publication of the Planudean Anthology. This anthology, which had been compiled from the earlier anthology of Cephalas by Maximus Planudes as late as the fourteenth century, was printed at Florence in 1484 by the Greek scholar, Janus Lascaris, and many other editions followed.¹ The composition of Latin epigrams, either after the Greek or the Roman model, thenceforward became the delight of humanists all over Western Europe, the Scotsman, George

¹ See J. W. Mackail, *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology*, pp. 21-23.

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Buchanan, and the Englishman, Sir Thomas More, being among those who practised the art. The first collection of English epigrams is that of John Heywood, published in black letter in 1562.¹ He wrote six hundred epigrams in all, but they are such rather in name than in character. A large proportion of them are simply expansions of homely proverbs; and of the rest, many are nothing more than anecdotes in verse. Scarcely any of them are personal, and although Heywood was, as his translation of Seneca's tragedies shows, a classical scholar, his epigrams give little evidence of the study of Roman models. The epigram is recognised by Puttenham in his *Arte of English Poesie* (1589), who defines it as a form of poetry "in which every mery conceited man might, without any long studie or tedious ambage, make his frend sport and anger his foe, and give a prettie nip, or shew a sharpe conceit in few verses,"² and it is interesting to find that, instead of limiting the epigram to purposes of satire, he includes both epitaphs and posies under this term.

The true satiric epigram in the Roman sense arose in England just at the end of the sixteenth century, and at the same time as the satire proper. In 1598 Thomas Bastard published his

¹ Republished by the Spenser Society.

² Ed. Arber, p. 68.

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Chrestoleros,¹ consisting of nearly three hundred epigrams, arranged in seven books; and about the same time were written the better known epigrams of Sir John Davies.² Davies claims to be the direct successor and also the eclipser of Heywood :—

Heywood that did in epigrams excel
Is now put down since my light muse arose;
As buckets are put down into a well,
Or as a schoolboy putteth down his hose.³

His epigrams are all conceived in the manner of Martial, and are always satiric, and frequently foul-mouthed. In 1599 appeared John Weever's *Epigrammes in the oldest cut and newest fashion*, and with the turn of the century epigram-writing became the fashion in England. There are epigrams among the collected poems of Raleigh, and Donne practised this form of verse both in Latin and in English. In 1610 appeared John Heath's *Two Centuries of Epigrammes*, and the following year saw the publication of John Davies of Hereford's *Scourge of Folly*—a collection of two hundred and ninety-three epigrams, all satiric in character. In 1613 were published no less than three collections of epigrams, namely those of Sir John Harington, many of which were merely translations from Martial, Henry Parrott's

¹ Re-edited by E. V. Utterson, 1842.

² Published in Dyce's edition of the *Works of Christopher Marlowe*.

³ Epigram xxix.

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Laquei Ridiculosi, or Springes for Wood-cocks and William Gamage's *Linsi-Woolsie or two Centuries of Epigrammes*; these were succeeded in 1614 by a collection, entitled *Rubbe and a Great Caste*, by Thomas Freeman, and in 1616 appeared Ben Jonson's Epigrams in the folio edition of his works. Side by side with these collections of epigrams in the vernacular, others, written in Latin verse, were passing through the press. Campion had published a series of Latin epigrams as early as 1595, but the most famous of Latin epigrammatists was the Welsh schoolmaster, John Owen, whose verses won a European fame and were translated into several languages. His first three books of epigrams appeared in 1612, and were followed by others a little later.

The epigrams of Ben Jonson, which, in the letter to the Earl of Pembroke, he calls "the ripest of my studies," are by no means entirely satiric. Many of them are, and their grossness, which provoked Sir Walter Scott to say that their author enjoyed "using the language of scavengers and night-walkers," equals and even exceeds the grossness of Herrick. But mingled with these are epigrams of a very different character. There are, for instance, generous tributes of friendship to men like Donne, Camden, Francis Beaumont and Edward Alleyn, and complimentary verses to great nobles; included amongst them, too, are the touching epitaphs on

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“My first Daughter,” “My first Son,” and that on Salathiel Pavy, the chorister. Finally, there are gnomic verses “On Death” and “On Life and Death,” and epigrams in which the poet himself is the theme—“To my Book,” “To my Muse.” In all this, however, he does not depart far from the Roman manner. Complimentary verses, tributes to friends, epitaphs, gnomic verses and lines addressed to himself and his book, may all be found among the epigrams of Martial, though their number is small in comparison with the satiric verses. Yet, when compared with earlier English epigrammatists, Jonson must be credited with having widened the range of the epigram, and with having relieved the strain of scurrilous abuse by verses which appeal to the nobler side of man’s nature.

Meanwhile, a knowledge and appreciation of the Greek form of epigram was growing in England. Salmasius’s discovery of the famous Palatine Anthology at Heidelberg, in 1606, led to the circulation in manuscript of those epigrams not contained in the Planudean Anthology, and in 1629 the classical scholar and friend of Ben Jonson, Thomas Farnaby, published in London a collection of epigrams from the anthologies, to which he also added a Latin translation. Eight years later, Abraham Wright, by the publication of his *Delitiae Delitiarum*, familiarised classical students in England with the Latin epigrams,

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written after the Greek manner, by Italian, French and English humanists of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. And although most of the seventeenth century collections of English epigrams remained faithful to Martial and the satiric Roman manner, we nevertheless find, scattered through the works of some of the finer spirits of the age, a number of epigrams which recall the great anthologies of ancient Greece. One of the first poets to write epigrams in conformity with the Greek pattern was Drummond of Hawthornden. Among his collected poems, published in 1656, after his death, is a section entitled "Madrigals and Epigrams," the composition of which in all probability belonged to his youth. The title of the section is significant. As we have already seen, the seventeenth century madrigal aimed at the terseness of the epigram, and in these verses of Drummond it is impossible to say, judging from their literary quality, which are madrigals, and which are epigrams. There is a certain epigrammatic finish in almost all of them, but it is the epigrams of the Greek Anthology, not those of Martial, which serve as model. These verses of Drummond are not personal, and, as a consequence, they do not seek after satiric point; they may be described as short fanciful poems, which, both in matter and in style, conform to the manner of the countrymen of Meleager and Callimachus. Their literary quality is not high,

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but, as furnishing a contrast to the satiric epigram of the period, they are of some interest. The following will perhaps best illustrate Drummond's workmanship :

PROTEUS OF MARBLE

This is no work of stone,
Though it seems breathless, cold, and sense hath none,
But that false god which keeps
The monstrous people of the raging deeps.
Now that he doth not change his shape this while,
It is thus constant more you to beguile.

LOVE VAGABONDING

Sweet nymphs, if as ye stray,
Ye find the froth-born goddess of the sea,
All blubber'd, pale, undone,
Who seeks her giddy son,
That little god of Jove,
Whose golden shafts your chastest bosoms prove,
Who, leaving all the heavens, hath run away ;
If aught to him who finds him she'll impart,
Tell her he nightly lodgeth in my heart.

In approaching the epigrams of Herrick, we may dismiss with a very few words those of a satiric character. There is little wit in them to relieve the coarseness, and, strewn as they often are among the daintiest of his lyrics, they leave just the same unpleasant taste in the mouth which is produced by the satiric epigrams with which Catullus befouls the pages of his *Carmina*. The most that can be said for them is that they are

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neither more witless nor more foul than those written by many another epigrammatist of the Renaissance. It would seem, indeed, that coarse scurrility was at this time looked upon as an essential element in the making of a satiric epigram, and in reference to this it is interesting to notice that Campion introduces into his *Observations on the Art of English Poesie* epigrams quite as coarse as those of Jonson or Herrick, simply as literary exercises, and in order to illustrate the fitness of trochaic verse for this form of poetry.

The satiric epigrams of Herrick have much in common with those of Martial, but it is only fair to add that the influence of the Roman epigrammatist is by no means limited to verses of this character. There is abundant evidence that the author of the *Hesperides* had read Martial with the greatest care, and that, while he reproduced much of his indelicacy, he also had an eye for his terse mother-wit and vivacious fancy. One or two of his gnomic epigrams are literal translations from Martial, and he likes nothing better than to introduce one of his felicitous phrases into his verses,¹ or to round off a couplet with some sententious maxim borrowed from the Roman. His epigram *On Virtue* (298) will illustrate the practice as well as any :—

¹ e.g. : "Tis sin to throttle wine" (502), a translation of Martial's *Scelus est jugulare Falernum*" (Book i. 9).

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Each must in virtue strive for to excel ;
That man lives twice that lives the first life well—

where the second line is a translation of the following words :—

hoc est
Vivere bis, vita posse priore frui.¹

On other occasions he plays upon the fanciful idea of Martial's epigram, *On a Bee enclosed in Amber* ;² imitates, in his *Upon Julia washing herself in the River* (939), the twenty-second epigram of Martial's fourth Book ; and transfers the elaborate fancy of the epigram *Ad Diadumenum* (iii. 65) to a graceful complimentary poem addressed to his kinswoman, *The most fair and lovely Mistress Anne Soame* (375). One of the neatest of Herrick's epigrams is that entitled *His wish* (938) :—

Fat be my hind ; unlearned be my wife ;
Peaceful my night, my day devoid of strife :
To these a comely offspring I desire,
Singing about my everlasting fire.

Here, again, the suggestion comes from Martial's famous epigram to Quintilian (ii. 90), and as already noticed, many of the ideas of the *Panegyric on Sir Lewis Pemberton* (377) may be traced back, through Jonson's *Penshurst*,

¹ *Epigrammata*, x. 23.

² *Epigrammata*, iv. 32, and compare Herrick, *The Amber Bead* (817) and *Upon a Fly* (497).

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to Martial's description of the country-house of Faustinus (iii. 58).

But it is in those clear-cut epigrams in which his theme is the fate of his book of poems that Herrick comes nearest to Martial. He enters whole-heartedly into that half-serious and half-humorous mood in which Martial expresses his hopes of winning for himself a fair competence in this life and fame to all eternity. More than once in his epigrams "To his Book" he is translating the Roman literally, and on many other occasions he is drawing suggestions from him. He reproduces the shrewd humour of Martial in the following epigram :—

To read my book the virgin shy
May blush while Brutus standeth by ;
But when he's gone, read through what's writ,
And never stain a cheek for it.¹

and glances both at him and at Catullus in writing this :—

Make haste away, and let one be
A friendly patron unto thee :
Lest, rapt from hence, I see thee lie
Torn for the use of pastery :
Or see thy injur'd leaves serve well
To make loose gowns for mackerel :
Or see the grocers in a trice
Make hoods of thee to serve out spice.²

¹ *To his Book* (4) ; cf. Martial, *Epigrammata*, xi. 16.

² *To his Book* (844) ; cf. Martial, iii. 2, and Catullus, *Carmina*, xcv.

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But a large proportion of Herrick's epigrams have no connection with Martial, and are not conceived in the Roman manner at all; in theme and in style they recall the Greek Anthology. The extent of Herrick's acquaintance with the epigrams of that anthology, either in the original Greek or in Latin translations, is hard to determine. Mr Pollard has traced two or three of the epigrams to Greek originals,¹ but there is very little of that transference of some fortunate idea or phrase from the anthologists into the verses of the *Hesperides*, which we meet with in the case of Martial. The most, perhaps, that can be said is that the manner of the Greek anthologists was in the air, that it makes itself felt in the poems of Drummond and the later madrigalists, and that it reappears again and again in the epigrams of the *Hesperides*. Whether he is writing on erotic or on gnomic themes, addressing complimentary verses to the living, or writing epitaphs for the dead, Herrick acquires something of the Greek style. This is especially the case, too, with those prayers and dedicatory vows which he offers up to pagan gods and goddesses. These lack, of course, the element of sincerity which we meet with in similar epigrams of the Anthology, but it is surprising with what success

¹ See his notes to the following poems of the *Hesperides*, Nos. 121, 213, 271.

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Herrick feigns an accent of genuine feeling in such verses as the following :—

Mighty Neptune, may it please
Thee, the rector of the seas,
That my barque may safely run
Through the watery region.
And a tunny fish shall be
Offered up with thanks, to thee.¹

Stately goddess, do thou please,
Who art chief at marriages,
But to dress the bridal bed
When my love and I shall wed,
And a peacock proud shall be
Offered up by us to thee.²

Occasionally Herrick's humour peeps out in these prayers to classic deities :—

Thy sooty godhead I desire
Still to be ready with thy fire;
That, should my book despised be,
Acceptance it might find of thee.³

¹ *Hymn to Neptune* (325). With this we may compare the following epigram from the Palatine Anthology (vi. 251): "Phœbus who holdest the sheer steep of Leucas, far seen of mariners and washed by the Ionian sea, receive of sailors this mess of hand-kneaded barley bread and a libation mingled in a little cup, and the gleam of a brief-shining lamp, that drinks with half-saturate mouth from a sparing oil-flask; in recompense whereof be gracious, and send on their sails a favourable wind to run with them to the harbours of Actium." (Translated by J. W. Mackail, *Select Epigrams from the Greek Anthology*, p. 126.)

² *Hymn to Juno* (360).

³ *To Vulcan* (613).

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But in his *Hymn to the Muses* (657) he grows lyrical in the warmth of his ardour :—

O you, the virgins nine,
That do our souls incline
To noble discipline,
Nod to this vow of mine.
Come then, and now inspire
My viol and my lyre
With your eternal fire,
And make me one entire
Composer in your choir.
Then I'll your altars strew
With roses sweet and new ;
And ever live a true
Acknowledger of you.

The epigrams on the theme of love are inferior in quality to his love-lyrics, but through them he often conveys to his many mistresses a well-turned compliment. In *The Rosary* (45) it is Julia that is the recipient of the compliment :—

One ask'd me where the roses grew,
I bade him not go seek,
But forthwith bade my Julia show
A bud in either cheek.

In the following it is Electra :—

When out of bed my love doth spring,
'Tis but as day a-kindling :
But when she's up and fully dress'd
'Tis then broad day throughout the east.¹

¹ *Upon Electra* (404).

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The pleasure which he finds in the sunshine of Sappho's smiles is implied in the following :—

Sappho, I will choose to go
Where the northern winds do blow
Endless ice and endless snow,
Rather than I once would see
But a winter's face in thee,
To benumb my hopes and me.¹

And in these lines to Anthea he recalls the fancifulness of the sonneteers :—

Sick is Anthea, sickly is the spring,
The primrose sick, and sickly everything ;
The while my dear Anthea does but droop,
The tulips, lilies, daffodils do stoop :
But when again she's got her healthful hour,
Each, bending then, will rise a proper flower.²

Some of his epigrams are concerned with Nature, though there is far less real insight into the forms of natural life shown in his epigrams than in his lyrics. He prefers, instead, to let his fancy play, and to inform us "how lilies came white" (190), "how roses came red" (706), or "how violets came blue" (260). But his epigram on the daffodil, though inferior to the lyric on the same flower (see page 261), deserves to be quoted here :—

¹ *To Sappho* (803).

² *To Anthea* (1054).

Non-Lyrical Poems of the *Hesperides*

When a daffodil I see,
Hanging down his head towards me,
Guess I may what I must be :
First, I shall decline my head ;
Secondly, I shall be dead :
Lastly, safely buried.¹

One is not often disposed to turn to Herrick in one's search for a philosophy of life, though it must be remembered that he loved to assume the *rôle* of feruled preceptor and inculcate some practical lessons of conduct by means of gnomic epigrams. But, except where he is borrowing a thought from Seneca or some other Roman moralist, his philosophy is not much more profound than that of Shakespeare's Corin, who knew that "the property of rain is to wet, and of fire to burn, and that a great cause of the night is lack of the sun." He gravely informs us that "all things decay with time," that health and a gentle disposition are among man's most prized possessions, that work must precede wages, and that victory is possible only after conflict. The faith by which he lived was not unlike that happy blend of Stoicism and Epicureanism which we meet with in the odes of Horace. He enjoys to the full the fleshpots of Egypt while they are within his reach, but his easy mind can also rest content with the manna of the wilderness—the pulse and beans of Dean

¹ *Divination by a Daffodil* (107).

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Prior. Estimating an equal mind and mastery over self at their true worth, he places "content" above "cates":—

'Tis not the food, but the content
That makes the table's merriment.
Where trouble serves the board, we eat
The platters there, as soon as meat.
A little pipkin with a bit
Of mutton or of veal in it,
Set on my table, trouble-free,
More than a feast contenteth me.¹

There is scarcely a trace of distinctively Christian ethics among these gnomic verses. When he feels particularly snug in his Devonshire home, he offers up a hymn of thanksgiving to his Lares, his

Chimney-keepers,
(I dare not call ye chimney-sweepers)—

and bedecks their idol brows with crowns of green parsley and garlic chives.² His purpose is to make the most of this life, uncertain what may follow:—

Let us now take time and play,
Love and live here while we may :
Drink rich wine, and make good cheer,
While we have our being here ;
For once dead and laid i' the grave,
No return from thence we have.³

¹ *Content, not Cates* (312). ² *Hymn to the Lares* (674).

³ *To Sappho* (691).

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Even in the noblest of his gnomic epigrams, that entitled *The Christian Militant* (323), there is, as already observed, more of the classic Stoicism—in *utrumque paratus*—than of the Sermon on the Mount:—

A man prepar'd against all ills to come,
That dares to dead the fire of martyrdom ;
That sleeps at home, and sailing there at ease,
Fears not the fierce sedition of the seas ;
That's counter-proof against the farm's mishaps,
Undreadful too of courtly thunderclaps ;
That wears one face, like heaven, and never shows
A change when fortune either comes or goes ;
That keeps his own strong guard in the despite
Of what can hurt by day or harm by night ;
That takes and re-delivers every stroke
Of chance (as made up all of rock and oak) ;
That sighs at others' death, smiles at his own
Most dire and horrid crucifixion.
Who for true glory suffers thus, we grant
Him to be here our Christian militant.

No poet has ever been more ready than Herrick to place his muse at the service of his friends ; having little silver or gold to bestow, he leaves lyrics and epigrams for legacies, and promises the immortality of reflected fame to all whose names are enshrined in his verses. In these occasional poems, most of which are short and epigrammatic, we find him ever prepared to rejoice with those that rejoice, and to weep with those that weep : he is the attendant spirit at

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christenings and funerals, offering in his graceful, affectionate, but never very profound way, felicitation or condolence. He is the "music of a feast," and the *domiduca* of home-coming brides; he pays compliments to high-born ladies with the easy grace of the practised cavalier, and to the memory of his many friends, kinsmen, and kinswomen, he builds a "college," a "white temple of my heroes," where, immortalised in verse, they shall dwell to all eternity.¹ So many of these complimentary epigrams have been quoted in the first part of this volume, with the object of throwing light upon the poet's friendships, that it is unnecessary to refer to them again; but space must be found for some study of his epitaphs. The epitaph was regarded as a form of epigram already by Puttenham,² and epitaph-writing was the fashion of Elizabethan England from Turberville to Jonson. Herrick was a master of the art, and many of his epitaphs are, in their simple beauty and exquisite pathos, equal to the best epitaphs of the Alexandrian anthologists. Except in his verses on his dying brother William (No. 186), his grief has little real intensity, and those epitaphs are accordingly the best where the situation calls for gentle pity rather than the tearless grief of pent-up passion. He wrote epitaphs on men and women who passed away

¹ See the poem, *To his honoured kinsman, Sir Richard Stone* (496).

² *Arte of English Poesie*, chap. xxviii.

Non-Lyrical Poems of the *Hesperides*

full of years, and on mothers dying in childbed ;
but his touch is surest where it is lightest—in his
epitaphs on little children, or on maidens taken
hence in the first bloom of womanhood :—

Here she lies, a pretty bud,
Lately made of flesh and blood.
Who as soon fell fast asleep;
As her little eyes did peep.
Give her strewings, but not stir
The earth that lightly covers her.¹

Here a solemn fast we keep ;
While all beauty lies asleep
Hush'd be all things—no noise here,
But the toning of a tear :
Or a sigh of such as bring
Cowslips for her covering.²

It is characteristic of Herrick that he should
write epitaphs on himself. His address *To
Robin Redbreast* (50) reveals that delicate fancy
and sureness of artistic touch which are the
secret of so many of his best verses :—

Laid out for dead, let thy last kindness be
With leaves and moss-work for to cover me :
And while the wood-nymphs my cold corpse inter,
Sing thou my dirge, sweet-warbling chorister !
For epitaph, in foliage, next write this :
Here, here the tomb of Robin Herrick is.

¹ *Upon a Child that died* (310).

² *An Epitaph upon a Virgin* (450).

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In a rather more serious mood he writes *His Own Epitaph* (617) :—

As wearied pilgrims, once possest
Of long'd-for lodging, go to rest,
So I, now having rid my way,
Fix here my button'd staff and stay.
Youth, I confess, hath me misled ;
But age hath brought me safe to bed.

From these epitaphs on his own decease we pass, in the last place, to those epigrams—some of them not exceeding the single distich—"On Himself." It was the practice of the Anacreontic poets and of Catullus to write epigrams of this character, but they are seldom met with in English poetry outside of the pages of the *Hesperides*. Herrick's epigrams "On Himself" display the personal touch of his verses in its purest form. Occasionally there is a certain element of quiet humour in these poems, as for instance in the following, written after completing the *Hesperides* :—

The work is done ; young men and maidens, set
Upon my curls the myrtle coronet,
Wash'd with sweet ointments : thus at last I come
To suffer in the Muses' martyrdom ;
But with this comfort, if my blood be shed,
The Muses will wear blacks when I am dead.¹

But more often the note is one of wistfulness—regret for the years that have slipped from his

¹ *On Himself* (1128).

Non-Lyrical Poems of the *Hesperides*

grasp, or for the loss of the treasured gift of song :—

Ask me why I do not sing
To the tension of the string,
As I did not long ago,
When my members full did flow?
Grief, ay me ! hath struck my lute
And my tongue, at one time, mute.¹

A wearied pilgrim, I have wandered here
Twice five-and-twenty, bate me but one year ;
Long I have lasted in this world, 'tis true,
But yet those years that I have lived, but few.
Who by his grey hairs doth his lusters tell,
Lives not those years, but he that lives them well.
One man has reach'd his sixty years, but he
Of all those threescore, has not liv'd half three.
He lives, who lives to virtue ; men who cast
Their ends for pleasure, do not live, but last.²

The epigrams of the *Hesperides* will never win from the reader the same recognition that the lyrics have won, for they are inferior to them in variety of rhythmic effect, in warmth of emotion, and in sustained power. But as master of an art rarely practised in England with much success, Herrick has acquired a new title to fame. And at the same time these epigrams, by virtue of the resemblance which they bear to those of Greek literature in the Alexandrian period, deepen our sense of the classical qualities of their author's genius.

¹ *On Himself* (332).

² *On Himself* (1088).

CHAPTER IV

THE NOBLE NUMBERS

IT is sometimes stated that the secular poems, in particular the love-lyrics, belong to Herrick's early years, and the *Noble Numbers* to the time when he was a priest in orders. We have already seen that the first half of this statement is not entirely correct, but exception can scarcely be taken to the second half of it. It is possible that some of the religious carols which find a place in the *Noble Numbers*, and which were set to music and sung before the King at Whitehall, were composed while Herrick still lived in the neighbourhood of the Court, but the bulk of his religious verses were in all probability written at Dean Prior. In his *Farewell to Poetry*, written to all appearance at the time when he took orders, he tells us that his mind is now filled with "sublime respect and conscience unto priesthood," and that henceforth he must part company with that Muse of Helicon with whom he has

outworn

The fresh and fairest flourish of the morn
With flame and rapture ;

HESPERIDES:
OR,
THE WORKS
BOTH
HUMANE & DIVINE
OF
ROBERT HERRICK *Esq.*

OVID.

Effugient avidos Carmina nostra Rogos.



L O N D O N,

Printed for *John Williams*, and *Francis Eaglesfield*,
and are to be sold by *Tho: Hunt*, Book-seller
in *Exon.* 1648.

The *Noble Numbers*

but he goes on to say—

when my diviner muse
Shall want a handmaid (as she oft will use),
Be ready, thou for me, to wait upon her,
Though as a servant, yet a maid of honour.¹

As we have already seen, the vow to part company with the Muse of Helicon was not kept, but there can be little doubt that we owe the *Noble Numbers* chiefly to the fact that Herrick was by profession a clergyman. In seeking the help of his diviner muse, whose habitation is not Mount Helicon, but “the secret place of Oreb or of Sinai,” he was also falling into line with the practice of many other poets of the day. The religious lyric of the seventeenth century is in its way as unique a creation as the sonnet-sequences of the Elizabethan age; intimately associated with the High Church movement of the Caroline age, its nearest parallel is to be found in the religious lyric of the High Church movement of the early Victorian era. The religious lyric in the age of Elizabeth is of small account. The composition of metrical versions of the Psalms was then in vogue, and among the early Elizabethan song-books—for example, William Byrd’s *Psalms, Sonets, and Songs of Sadness and Pietie*² (1587), and John Mundy’s *Songs and Psalmes*³ (1594)—we find

¹ “Poems not included in the *Hesperides*,” ed. Pollard, ii. 267.

² See Bolle, *Die gedruckten englischen Liederbücher bis 1600*, p. 2.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

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a number of the Psalms set to madrigal music, and arranged for part-singing. We also know that in England, as well as in France, the sonnet came to be used for the expression of religious sentiment. In 1591, Henry Constable published his *Spiritual Sonnettes to the Honour of God and His Sayntes*¹; in 1595, appeared the *Divine Centurie of Spirituall Sonnets* by Barnabe Barnes, and in 1597, Henry Lok's *Sundrie Sonnets of Christian Passions*. A year or two later, Gervase Markham published two collections of religious lyrics, written in a six-line stanza and entitled *Tears of the Beloved* (1600) and *Mary Magdalen's Tears* (1601) respectively. But the literary quality of these collections of religious verses is exceedingly low, and the only lyrics of a religious character in the Elizabethan age which have the breath of true poetic life in them are those of the Jesuit Father, Robert Southwell, who stands far apart from the main tendencies of the age in which he lived.

The seventeenth century saw a rapid growth of this kind of lyric poetry. Jonson's *Poems of Devotion* are too few in number to be taken into account here, but reference may be made to the *Divine and Moral Songs* of Campion, which appeared side by side with his madrigals and canzonets in 1613. In his religious, as in his secular, work, Campion is a transitional figure.

¹ Ed. W. C. Hazlitt.

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Some of his divine songs are in the manner of the old psalm-lyrics of Byrd or Mundy, but in the following, and in others like it, we discern the first beginnings of a religious lyric, touched with that personal feeling which a few years later was to rise to intensest fervour :—

View me, Lord, a work of Thine.
Shall I then lie drown'd in night ?
Might Thy grace in me but shine,
I should seem made all of light.

But my soul still surfeits so
On the poison'd baits of sin,
That I strange and ugly grow ;
All is dark and foul within.

Cleanse me, Lord, that I may kneel
At Thine altar, pure and white ;
They that once Thy mercies feel
Gaze no more on earth's delight.

Worldly joys, like shadows, fade,
When the heavenly light appears ;
But the covenants Thou hast made,
Endless, know not days nor years.

In Thy Word, Lord, is my trust,
To Thy mercies fast I fly ;
Though I am but clay and dust,
Yet Thy grace can lift me high.

But the true founder of the seventeenth-century religious lyric was Donne, some of whose *Divine Poems*, though not published until 1633,

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were written before 1607. Donne's influence upon the Caroline religious lyrists—Herbert, Crashaw, and Vaughan—in respect of style has often been alluded to, but it is less generally recognised that he is their master in the art of infusing personal lyric emotion into religious poetry. There is nothing of the metrical psalm in the *Holy Sonnets* or the *Litany* of Donne; running through these poems is the note of poignant individuality, and as we read them, we feel ourselves brought face to face with a human soul in the throes of contrition, or, again, rising to a mood of seraphic exaltation. We hear the voice of a repentant sinner, lamenting his wasted youth, in his *Hymn to God, the Father*:—

Wilt Thou forgive that sin where I begun,
Which was my sin, though it were done before?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin, through which I run,
And do run still, though still I do deplore?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,
For I have more.

Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I have won
Others to sin, and made my sin their door?
Wilt Thou forgive that sin which I did shun
A year or two, but wallowed in a score?
When Thou hast done, Thou hast not done,
For I have more.

I have a sin of fear that when I have spun
My last thread, I shall perish on the shore;

The *Noble Numbers*

But swear by Thyself, that at my death Thy Son
Shall shine as he shines now, and heretofore ;
And having done that, Thou hast done ;
I fear no more.¹

Nor is Donne content with mere emotion in his religious lyrics. Here, as in his secular verse, he loves to pack the lines with profound and original thoughts, aiming rather at compression than clearness of utterance. His most sustained religious lyric is his *Litany*, the following stanzas of which well illustrate this quality of his verse :—

From being anxious, or secure,
Dead clods of sadness, or light squibs of mirth,
From thinking that great courts immure
All, or no happiness, or that this earth
Is only for our prison framed,
Or that Thou'rt covetous
To them whom Thou lov'st, or that they're maim'd
From reaching this world's sweet who seek Thee thus,
With all their might, good Lord, deliver us.

From needing danger to be good,
From owing Thee yesterday's tears to-day,
From trusting so much to Thy blood,
That in that hope we wound our soul away,
From bribing Thee with alms, to excuse
Some sin more burdenous,
From light affecting, in religion, news,
From thinking us all soul, neglecting thus
Our mutual duties, Lord, deliver us.²

¹ Donne's Poems, ed. E. K. Chambers, i. 213.

² *Poems*, i. 181.

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From Donne's *Divine Poems* to George Herbert's *Temple* (1633), and thence to Crashaw's *Steps to the Temple* (1646) and the religious lyrics of Vaughan and Traherne, is but an easy step, and with these later publications we reach the full florescence of the seventeenth-century religious lyric.

Herrick's *Noble Numbers* have far less in common with the Caroline religious lyric than his secular lyrics have with those of the Cavalier singers, though it must be allowed that, with the publication of the *Hesperides* in 1648, these two forms of lyric poetry meet and mingle. Of the spiritual wrestlings which are revealed in Herbert's *Temple*, of the rapt ecstasy of Crashaw, or the mystic soarings of Traherne or Vaughan, Herrick knew nothing at all. Among his *Noble Numbers* are many poems of unquestionable orthodoxy, in which he sets forth the attributes of God, or depicts the warfare of soul with sense; and there are others in which he shows his acquaintance with the writings of the great Church Fathers—St Augustine, St Ambrose, St Bernard, "learned Basil," and "learned Aquinas." But these orthodox verses disclose very little of the man's rare personality, and show no trace of religious emotion. And no sooner does his true character appear than his orthodoxy falls from him like a mask, and the pagan Flamen stands revealed to

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our gaze. His *Thanksgiving to God for his House* (see page 103) is almost identical in spirit with his hymns to the Lares; and his famous *Litany to the Holy Spirit* (41), beautiful as it is, is wholly unlike that of Donne, and is distinguished more for its naïve humour than for its piety :—

When the artless doctor sees
No one hope, but of his fees,
And his skill runs on the lees,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me !

When his potion and his pill
Has, or none, or little skill,
Meet for nothing but to kill,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me !

When the passing bell doth toll,
And the furies in a shoal
Come to fright a parting soul,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me !

When the tapers now burn blue,
And the comforters are few,
And that number more than true,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me !

When the priest his last hath prayed,
And I nod to what is said,
'Cause my speech is now decayed,
Sweet Spirit, comfort me !

Nothing was further from Herrick's mind than irreverence when he wrote verses such as these ;

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the truth is that his conception of religion, in spite of his reading of the Fathers, was scarcely more mature than that of a child of eight. His God is neither the stern Taskmaster of the Puritans, nor the ineffable King whom Laud taught his followers to worship in "the beauty of holiness." He is an amiable Being with whom the poet stands on very intimate terms; God has given him his bin, his pipkin, his piggin, and his teeming hen, and for these he renders the thanks that are due; he even invites Him to read his book of verses, assuring Him, with a *naïveté* that almost takes one's breath away, that He will take no harm from their impurities!—

Pardon me, God, once more I Thee entreat,
That I have placed Thee in so mean a seat;
Where round about Thou seest but all things vain,
Uncircumcis'd, unseason'd and profane.
But as Heaven's public and immortal eye
Looks on the filth, but is not soil'd thereby,
So Thou, my God, may'st on this impure look,
But take no tincture from my sinful book.¹

In another poem, *To God* (232), he entreats Him to speak familiarly with him of love, promising, for his own part, to reply

By way of Epithalamy;

and we know what Herrick's epithalamies are like! The Christ whom he adores is the child

¹ *To God* (113).

The *Noble Numbers*

of Bethlehem, a "Twelfth-tide King" to be honoured with wassailings, and to whom he bids a child bring childish presents—a flower, a coral and a whistle—after the manner of the *Secunda Pastorum* of the Wakefield cycle of Mystery Plays. Or, if he presents to us the Christ of Calvary, it is under the figure of a tragic Roscius:—

The Cross shall be Thy stage, and Thou shalt there
The spacious field have for Thy theatre.
Thou art that Roscius and that marked-out man
That must this day act the tragedian
To wonder and affrightment ; Thou art He
Whom all the flux of nations comes to see,
Not those poor thieves that act their parts with Thee.¹

He is conscious of sin, and in one of his quaintest poems he confesses that his heart is an Augean stable:—

Lord, I confess that Thou alone art able
To purify this my Augean stable ;
Be the seas water, and the land all soap,
Yet if Thy blood not wash me, there's no hope.²

But this sense of sin does not disquiet him for long ; he recognises the place of a Saviour in the scheme of redemption, and is as sure of salvation as any elect Anabaptist. Hell, he informs us, is "the place where whipping-cheer abounds,"³

¹ *Rex tragicus ; or, Christ going to His Cross* (263).

² *To his Saviour* (73).

³ *Hell* (120).

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but it has no terrors for him, and he intones
his creed with unfaltering voice :—

I do believe that die I must,
And be return'd from out my dust :
I do believe that when I rise,
Christ I shall see with these same eyes.
I do believe that I must come,
With others, to the dreadful doom.
I do believe the bad must go
From thence to everlasting woe ;
I do believe the good, and I,
Shall live with Him eternally.
I do believe I shall inherit
Heaven by Christ's mercies, not my merit.
I do believe the One in Three,
And Three in perfect unity :
Lastly, that Jesus is a deed
Of gift from God : and here's my creed.¹

In one of his most beautiful lyrics he describes
the joys of that Heaven for which he is bound.
The abode of the blessed is a white island where
immortal spirits pursue immortal pleasures and
where no monstrous fancies intrude :—

In this world, the isle of dreams,
While we sit by sorrow's streams,
Tears and terrors are our themes
Reciting :

But when once from hence we fly,
More and more approaching nigh
Unto young Eternity
Uniting :

¹ *His Creed* (78).

The *Noble Numbers*

In that whiter island, where
Things are evermore sincere ;
Candour here, and lustre there
Delighting :

There no monstrous fancies shall
Out of hell an horror call,
To create, or cause at all,
Affrighting :

There in calm and cooling sleep
We our eyes shall never steep,
But eternal watch shall keep,
Attending

Pleasures such as shall pursue
Me immortalised, and you ;
And fresh joys as never to
Have ending.¹

The childlike mind of Herrick, in all that pertains to the Christian faith, is disclosed in poem after poem of the *Noble Numbers*, and as we contemplate it we wonder what the sermons were like which he preached to his Devonshire parishioners. He turned this childlike mind to good account in his "graces for children," the most familiar of which might have come straight from "*A Child's Garden of Verses*."

Here a little child I stand,
Heaving up my either hand :

¹ *The White Island; or, Place of the Blest* (128).

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Cold as paddocks though they be,
Here I lift them up to thee,
For a benison to fall
On our meat and on us all. Amen.¹

But in the following verses *To God*, which are not placed on the lips of a child, it is hard to believe that we are listening to a contemporary of George Herbert or Bishop Hall :—

Lord, do not beat me,
Since I do sob and cry,
And swoon away to die
Ere thou dost threat me.
Lord, do not scourge me
If I by lies and oaths
Have soil'd myself or clothes,
But rather purge me.²

In the *Noble Numbers* the epigrams are much more numerous than the lyrics, and many of them are confined to a single distich. Most of them add nothing to Herrick's fame as a poet, but occasionally they convey some new thought, or some old thought set forth in a new and striking way. The following may serve as examples :—

God, when He takes my goods and chattels hence,
Gives me a portion, giving patience :
What is in God is God ; if so it be
He patience gives, He gives Himself to me.³

¹ *Another Grace for a Child* (95).

² *To God* (49).

³ *Upon God* (87).

The *Noble Numbers*

There is no evil that we do commit,
But hath th' extraction of some good from it :
As when we sin, God, the great Chemist, thence
Draws out th' elixir of true penitence.¹

The most sustained of the lyrics in the *Noble Numbers* are the two dirges—*The Dirge of Jephthah's Daughter* (83) and *The Dirge of Dorcas* (123). The beauty of the latter is somewhat marred by the same kind of materialism which we find in the poet's "Thanksgiving to God for his House," but the former is quite free from this. It represents the Jewish maidens gathered about the grave of the sacrificed virgin, shedding bitter tears for the sister they have lost, and strewing daffodils and other flowers about her tomb. There is at times a curious, but not unseemly, aroma of the bridal-chamber in this funeral dirge, but the tone of it is elegiac throughout, and the concluding stanzas are imbued with all the caressing fancy and exquisite pathos of Herrick's lyric genius :

Sleep in thy peace, thy bed of spice,
And make this place all paradise.
May sweets grow here, and smoke from hence
Fat frankincense :
Let balm and cassia send their scent
From out thy maiden-monument.

May no wolf howl, or screech-owl stir
A wing about thy sepulchre !

¹ *Sin* (196).

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No boisterous winds, or storms, come hither
To starve or wither
Thy soft sweet earth ! but, like a spring,
Love keep it ever flourishing.

May all shy maids, at wonted hours,
Come forth to strew thy tomb with flow'rs :
May virgins, when they come to mourn,
Male-incense burn
Upon thine altar ! then return,
And leave thee sleeping in thy urn.

Herrick's supremacy over all his contemporaries in the field of lyric poetry is partly due to the greater volume and variety of his poems, partly also to the fact that he was before all things a consummate artist. The mob of gentleman who, in these cavaliering days, spent idle moments in tossing off verses of gallantry to their mistresses, prided themselves upon nothing so much as the ease and speed with which they wrote. One of the most famous of them, "natural, easy Suckling," even brought it as a reproach against Carew that—

the issue of 's brain

Was seldom brought forth but with trouble and pain.¹

But Herrick, spending long years amid the seclusion of his country vicarage, and treasuring his poems with idolatrous affection, thought otherwise. The easy flow of his lyrics gives,

¹ *A Sessions of the Poets.*

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perhaps, the impression that they were written in haste ; but if so, they were corrected at leisure, and not given to the world until they had reached that state of chiselled perfection which satisfied the demands of a poet who was as fastidious as Gray :

Better 'twere my book were dead,
Than to live not perfected.¹

In addition to the authentic text of 1648, we possess, as we have already seen, earlier printed versions of some of the *Hesperides* poems ; moreover, there are to be found among the Ashmole, Harley, Egerton, and Rawlinson MSS. earlier renderings of some of the most sustained of Herrick's verses, including the *Farewell* and *Welcome to Sack*, some of the fairy poems, and the *Nuptial Song on Sir Clipseby Crew*. These versions have been carefully collated with those of the 1648 volume by Dr Grosart and Mr Pollard, and furnish us with abundant evidence of the author's unsparing use of the file. The twenty-three stanzas of the Harleian MS. version of the "Nuptial Song" are reduced in the *Hesperides* to sixteen, though some of the rejected stanzas seem to our less exacting taste almost faultless. Elsewhere we find single lines, and sometimes whole stanzas, entirely remodelled, and a single illustration will show how much

¹ *His Request to Julia* (59).

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they gain by the process. The fourteenth stanza of the epistle *To Mr John Weekes* (336) reads as follows in the Egerton MS. :—

When the high Helen her fair cheeks
Showed to the army of the Greeks.
At which I'll rise
(Blind though as midnight in my eyes),
And, hearing it,
Flutter and crow, and in a fit
Of young concupiscence, and feel
New flames within the aged steal.

In the *Hesperides* it is altered to the following:—

When the fair Helen from her eyes
Shot forth her loving sorceries.
At which I'll rear
Mine aged limbs above my chair,
And, hearing it,
Flutter and crow as in a fit
Of fresh concupiscence, and cry :
No lust there's like to poetry.

One of the most radical and most interesting changes introduced by Herrick into the *Hesperides* is that which we encounter in the poem, entitled *The Apparition of his Mistress calling him to Elysium* (575). This was first published in 1640, and contained the following lines describing the modern dramatists who sit with Homer, Virgil, "soft Catullus," "sharp-fang'd Martial," and other great classic poets in the green meadows of Elysium :

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Among which synod, crown'd with sacred bays
And flatt'ring ivy, we'll have, to recite their plays,
Shakespeare and Beaumont, swans to whom the spheres
Listen while they call back the former years
To teach the truth of scenes.

Eight years later, it seems that Herrick had come round to the common opinion of the age that Fletcher was a greater dramatist than Shakespeare, and so he alters the verses as follows :—

Among which glories, crown'd with sacred bays
And flatt'ring ivy, to recite their plays—
Beaumont and Fletcher, swans to whom all ears
Listen, while they, like sirens in their spheres,
Sing their *Evadne*.

We may think what we like of the poet's dramatic taste, but must acknowledge how much the later rendering surpasses the earlier in respect of style and rhythm. Illustrations of the emendations made by the poet might be furnished to any extent, but they all tell the same tale—gain in terseness and simplicity of utterance, and, likewise, in purity and variety of rhythm.

The most obvious quality of Herrick's style is its freedom from the fashionable mannerisms of his day. There is at times a certain quaintness in his diction, and, more rarely, a Jonsonian fondness for inversions. Mr Courthope has also drawn attention to his occasional use of strange words like "carcanet" and "pannicle," and to his

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fondness for diminutives like "cherrylet" and "pipkinnet"; but in the twelve hundred poems of the *Hesperides* there is scarcely a trace of the strained conceits, the violent comparisons, the recondite allusions, and all the rest of the metaphysic wit of the fantastic school of poetry then in vogue. To the allurements of this seventeenth-century poetic diction even so sure an artist as Milton fell a victim in the early portion of his career, but Herrick, from first to last, kept himself free from blemish. At the same time, he is free from the affectations of the Elizabethans. He admits into his verses neither the archaisms and provincialisms of Spenser, nor the indirectness and over-subtlety of the sonneteers; and everything in the nature of word-quibbling he regards with just abhorrence. In the Ashmole MS. version of *A Country Life* (106) there occurs the following line:

Vice is vice-gerent at the court.

Recognising afterwards that his readers might accuse him of punning, he recasts it thus:—

Vice rules the most or all at court.

The secret of his art consists in the perfect adjustment of the style to the theme. In lyrics like *The May-pole is up* (695), *The Hag is astride* (643) or *The Peter-Penny* (762), where he is

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imitating the rhythm of the popular song, his diction is also extremely simple. Simplicity is likewise sought in most of his song-lyrics, and the beauty of the song *To Anthea* (267), *The Night-Piece to Julia* (619), or *The Mad Maid's Song* (412), is largely due to the magic effect produced by the homely words. In poems of this nature he relies upon monosyllabic words to a greater extent than any other English poet, and it is not at all difficult to find among the *Hesperides* whole stanzas like the following, where nothing but monosyllables appear :—

A heart as soft, a heart as kind,
A heart as sound and free
As in the whole world thou canst find,
That heart I'll give to thee.¹

Again, in the poem *His Grange, or Private Wealth* (724), which contains one hundred and forty-five words, only fifteen of them run to more than a single syllable. Where, however, he departs most widely from the manner of the song-lyric, as, for instance, in his odes and elegies, his style grows more elaborate. Still pursuing clearness and precision of utterance, and avoiding everything in the nature of preciousness, he at the same time manages to introduce high-sounding latinised words, enriches the verses with the treasures of classic story, and makes a bold use

¹ *To Anthea* (267).

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of figures of speech. The result is that his verses acquire a certain massiveness, a resonance, and an august, imperial splendour, which place them at a wide distance from the homely strains of his songs. We meet with this heightened style in his *Farewell* and *Welcome to Sack*, and in the lines, entitled *The Apparition of his Mistress calling him to Elysium* (575). His style as a whole is not particularly rich in metaphor, but in some of his more sustained flights of song he uses it with magnificent effect, and in such a stanza as the following, we see him passing from one metaphor to another with the ease and boldness of Shakespeare :—

Alas ! for me, that I have lost
 E'en all almost ;
Sunk is my sight, set is my sun,
And all the loom of life undone :
The staff, the elm, the prop, the shelt'ring wall
 Whereon my vine did crawl,
Now, now blown down ; needs must the old stock fall.¹

A fondness for classical allusions is one of the marked characteristics of his style, and gives to it much of its classical colour. These are not the trite references which we meet with in much of the poetry of the Renaissance ; without being recondite or obscure, they bear witness to his sound scholarship, and show, in particular, his curious delight in ancient ritual. These allusions

¹ *An Ode to Endymion Porter upon his Brother's Death* (185).

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are most noticeable in that early poem, *A Country Life: to his Brother, Thomas Herrick* (106), and in *His Age: To Mr John Wickes* (336); and again, in his impassioned *Farewell to Poetry*, from which the following lines are taken:—

And in that mystic frenzy we have hurled,
As with a tempest, nature through the world,
And in a whirlwind twirl'd her home, aghast
At that which in her ecstasy had past.
Thus crown'd with rosebuds, sack, thou mad'st me fly
Like fire-drakes, yet didst me no harm thereby,
O thou almighty nature, who didst give
True heat wherewith humanity doth live
Beyond its stinted circle, giving food,
While fame and resurrection to the good ;
Shoring them up 'bove ruin till the doom,
The general April of the world doth come,
That makes all equal. Many thousands should,
Were't not for thee, have crumbled into mould,
And with their sere-clothes rotted, not to show
Whether the world such spirits had or no ;
Whereas by thee those and a million since
Nor fate, nor envy, can their fames convince.
Homer, Musæus, Ovid, Maro, more
Of those Godful prophets long before
Held their eternal fires, and ours of late
(Thy mercy helping) shall resist strong fate,
Nor stoop to the centre, but survive as long
As fame or rumour hath or trump or tongue.¹

Most of the poems describing the rustic festivals of the countryside are as simple as his

¹ "Poems not included in the *Hesperides*," Pollard, ii. 264.

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songs, but even here there are times when reminiscences of the ceremonial rites of a by-gone age come back to him, and then his imagination glows with a rare incandescence and his style takes on a richer colour. Thus many of the stanzas of that limpid poem, *Corinna's going a-Maying* (178), the theme of which is peculiarly English, have an undoubted classic aroma, and the figurative opening lines might have come straight from Ovid :

Get up, get up for shame, the blooming morn
Upon her wings presents the god unshorn.
See how Aurora throws her fair
Fresh-quilted colours through the air :
Get up, sweet slug-a-bed, and see
The dew bespangling herb and tree.

The grace and purity of Herrick's diction are the natural complement to the grace and purity of his verse. He lived in an age when lyric poetry was wonderfully plastic in respect of the metrical moulds into which it flowed. The tyranny of the sonnet-structure was over, and no other rigid form of verse had arisen to take its place. The seventeenth century poet enjoyed perfect freedom in regard to form, and there was nothing to impede him in his desire to win for his lyric emotion that form which suited it best. Occasionally we find the freedom abused. I am not aware that any of the poets of this age followed the precept and example of Puttenham

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who, in his *Arte of English Poesie*, devised poems in the shape of triangles, cylinders, lozenges, and spheres,¹ and declared that though at first there "wil seeme nothing pleasant to an English eare, time and usage wil make them acceptable inough"; but George Herbert carves his verses into the shape of altars and "Easter wings," and even Herrick aspires to a pillar and a cross.² But these were only momentary aberrations, and do not need to be taken into account here.

Herrick had at his command an immense host of lyric measures, some of them of his own creation, and all of them skilfully adapted to the lyric theme which is being set forth. In his choice of metres, he shows once again that between him and the Elizabethan lyrists there was not much in common. He will have nothing to do with the sonnet or canzone, nor do the slow-moving measures of the early Elizabethan lyric—Alexandrine, septenarius, and poulter's measure—which still drag their weary chains through some of the lyrics of Campion, find favour with him. Verses of more than five beats are extremely rare in the *Hesperides*, and a striking feature of Herrick's metric art is his fondness for a short line in iambic or trochaic

¹ See chapter xi., "Of Proportion in Figure."

² See *The Pillar of Fame* (1129) and *The Cross* (*Noble Numbers*, 268).

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measure. Verses of four, three, or two accents are extremely common, and in his poem, *Upon his Departure Hence* (475), he keeps throughout to a line of a single accent. In his use of the heroic couplet, he seems to have followed the tendency of his age, which was slowly hammering the Augustan distich out of the flowing heroic verse of Chaucer; the structure of his earliest verses in this measure—e.g. the *Farewell to Sack*—is still free, but in his later poems, such as *The Christian Militant*, the pause at the end of the couplet is rarely missed, and there is a nicer balance of parts.

The delicacy of his ear and the fineness of his workmanship are best displayed in his strophic poems. Like most of the poets of the time, he keeps chiefly to iambic and trochaic measures. Dactyls are rarely met with in his poems,¹ and anapæsts are reserved almost entirely for certain song-lyrics in which he is employing the rhythms of popular airs²; but by the use of feminine rhymes, and by bringing into proximity lines of

¹ His most effective use of the dactyl is in his poem *To his Mistress* (94):

Choose me your valentine,
Next let us marry—
Love to the death will pine
If we long tarry.

² Instances are *Ceremonies for Christmas* (784), *The hag is astride* (643).

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different lengths, he attains a wonderful variety of effects. Thus the combination of verses with four accents and verses with two accents gives a delightful rhythm to his *Thanksgiving to God for his House* (*Noble Numbers*, 47):

Lord, thou hast given me a cell
 Wherein to dwell;
A little house, whose humble roof
 Is weather-proof,
Under the spars of which I lie
 Both soft and dry; . . .

and equally happy is the union of verses of one, two, and three accents in *To keep a True Lent* (*Noble Numbers*, 228):

Is this a fast, to keep
 The larder lean?
 And clean
From fat of veals and sheep?

Is it to quit the dish
 Of flesh, yet still
 To fill
The platter high with fish?

No; 'tis a fast to dole
 Thy sheaf of wheat,
 And meat,
Unto the hungry soul.

It is to fast from strife,
 From old debate,
 And hate;
To circumcise thy life.

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To show a heart grief-rent ;
To starve thy sin,
Not bin ;
And that's to keep thy Lent.

A still more signal illustration of this device of metric art is to be found, not unfittingly, in one of the several poems written in honour of Ben Jonson, from whom he had learnt so much of the harmonies of verse. Here a swelling effect is produced by the gradual lengthening of the line as the stanza advances, the rhythmic waves increasing in volume like the breakers of an incoming tide :

Ah Ben !
Say how or when
Shall we, thy guests,
Meet at those lyric feasts
Made at the Sun,
The Dog, the Triple Tun ?
Where we such clusters had
As made us nobly wild not mad ;
And yet each verse of thine
Out-did the meat, out-did the frolic wine.¹

All his poems are in rhyme, but occasionally he introduces, like Milton in *Lycidas*, a rhymeless verse into his more highly-wrought stanzas. This is the case with the first line of *His Recantation* (246) :

¹ *An Ode for Ben Jonson* (911).

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Love, I recant,
And pardon crave
That lately I offended ;
But 'twas
Alas !
To make a brave,
But no disdain intended.

Nor is he afraid of placing verses which rhyme together at a great distance from one another, the delicacy of his ear assuring him that the effect of the rhyme will not be lost. Thus in the poem, *To Daffodils* (316), the rhyme of the first verse is not taken up till we reach the ninth, and in *To Primroses filled with Morning Dew* (257), the stanza of which is a masterpiece of the most cunning craftsmanship, there is the same interval :

Why do ye weep, sweet babes? Can tears
Speak grief in you,
Who were but born
Just as the modest morn
Teem'd her refreshing dew?
Alas ! you have not known that shower
That mars a flower,
Nor felt the unkind
Breath of a blasting wind ;
Nor are ye worn with years,
Or warp'd as we,
Who think it strange to see
Such pretty flowers, like to orphans young,
To speak by tears before ye have a tongue.

Thus does one attempt to bring Herrick's lyric raptures to the dissecting table, and lay bare

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their intricate and finely-wrought structure. But in so doing, it must be remembered that it is the prerogative of all high art to defy the last analysis; we may codify Herrick's rhymes and tabulate his rhythms, but the evanescent, and yet ever-abiding, charm of his verse eludes our search.

When, finally, we turn from the contemplation of the outward structure of Herrick's lyrics to the spirit which informs them, we are at once impressed by the universality of his genius in all that pertains to lyricism. His consciousness of discipleship, while it attests the humility of his nature, must not be allowed to obscure the fact that he was the supreme master of the lyre in his own generation, and the glorious consummator of Renaissance song. All the most melodious notes in that loud chorus which made of the England of the Renaissance "a nest of singing-birds," are heard in the *Hesperides*. Herrick can attune his lyre to the strains of Marlowe and the earliest melodists of Elizabethan song, and, at the same time, he can rival the courtly gallantries of his immediate contemporaries, Carew and Suckling. The varying ply of his genius gives him also the right to sit down, in that Elysium which his poetic fancy wrought, with Anacreon on his right hand, and Catallus and Horace on his left. He is at once romantic and classic, learned and

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popular. Nothing is too low for his genius, and nothing too high. He can stoop to the ale-house catch, fashioning it into a thing of beauty; and he can rise to the full-voiced and intricate harmonies of the classic ode, giving to it fresh power and fresh enchantment.

In like manner, he is the bard of the town and of the country, of the court and of the meadows. His songs are sung in the thatched cottages of Dean Prior, in the taverns of Temple Bar or Southwark, and beneath the fretted roof of Inigo Jones's banqueting-house at Whitehall. He can render the homage of matchless verse to court-ladies and princes of the blood, to aldermen and city madams, to village youths bringing in the hock-cart, or to maidens in sun-bonnets going a-Maying. He can write epithalamies for wealthy knights, and charms for simple housewives; the Countess of Carlisle inspires his muse, and so does Prudence Baldwin. He can weave poetry, as fine as threads of gossamer, out of the fancies of an esoteric fairy-lore, and at the same time he can touch with beauty the crude superstitions of the country-side. He is both Christian and pagan, and, almost in the same breath, he will present his supplication to God the Father, and invite the protection of his "peculiar Lar."

The comparison which is sometimes drawn between Herrick and the lyrists of a later day—Burns, Shelley, Heine—is of singularly little

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value, for it is like a comparison between youth and age. Civilisation has moved forward since the day on which Herrick published his *Hesperides*, and advancing years have brought to lyric poetry deeper purposes, intenser emotions, and more obstinate questionings as to the whence and whither, the meaning and worth, of life. The Renaissance song of Marlowe and Breton and Shakespeare and Dekker and Herrick is the song of children in the eager air of a spring morning. Life to them is a perpetual holiday and the world is very new and very wonderful. They are conscious at times that this joy cannot last for ever, and that "youth's a stuff will not endure"; but the resilience of their natures soon lifts them out of their forebodings, and the thrill of exultation comes back to them with quickened pulse. They know nothing of the heartache of modern lyricism, and their philosophy of life is but to seize the day. With Burns and Shelley and Heine all this is changed. In them lyric emotion is adult and self-conscious. Their sweetest songs are only too often those that tell of saddest thought, and about them there gathers an intensity which is sometimes the child of hope, and sometimes of disillusionment. The passion of Burns, the alternating moods of hope and dejection which inform the songs of Shelley, the bitter-sweet emotion of Heine—these are almost unknown to Herrick

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and the other masters of Renaissance song. Burns and Shelley and Heine are of necessity more to us than Herrick can ever be ; for they speak to us in our own language, offering us hope and encouragement, rousing us to finer issues and nobler aspirations, or confirming us in our fears and misgivings. But there are times when, feeling that the world is too much with us, we try to free our minds from the burden of modernity ; and then it is that, in holiday mood, we turn to the *Hesperides*, and find refreshment of soul in the contemplation of an age that knew little of misgiving or disillusionment, and of a poet in whom, beneath the garb of an Anglican clergyman, there beat the heart of a votary of Apollo, "for ever piping songs for ever new," and bidding us gather rosebuds while we may in the bowered glades of Arcady.

APPENDIX I

HERRICK'S INDENTURE 'OF APPRENTICESHP

(*September 25, 1607*).¹

THIS indenture witnesseth that Robert Herick the sonne of Nicholas Herick of London, Goldsmithe, doth put him selfe apprentize to Sir Wm. Herick, knighte, citizen, and goldsmith of London to learne his Arte. And with him (after the manner of Apprentize) to serve from the feaste of St Bartholomew the apostle last past before the date heereof unto the full end and terme of Tenn yeres from thence next following to be full complete and ended. During which terme the said Apprentize his said master faithfully shall serve his secrets keepe his lawfull commandements every where gladly doe. He shall doe no damage to his said master, nor see to be done of other but that so his power shall lett, or forthwith give warning to his master of the same. He shall not waste the goode of his said master nor lend them unlawfully to any p.son: He shall not commit fornication nor contract matrimony within the said terme. He shall not playe at the cardes, dice, tables or any other unlawfull games whereby his said master may have any losse with his own goode or others during the said terme without licence of his said master; he shall neither beg nor stele: he shall not haunt Tavernes nor absent him selfe from his said master's service daie nor nighte unlawfully. But in all thinges as a faithfull

¹ From the Herrick Papers at Beaumanor.

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Apprentize he shall behave him selfe towards his said master and all his during the said terme. And the said master his said Apprentize in the same Arte which he useth, by the best means he can, shall teach and iustruct with due correction, finding unto his said Apprentize meate, drinke, Apparell, Lodging, and all other necessities according to the Custome of the Citty of London during the said terme. And for the true performance of all and singuler the said covenants and agreements either of the saide parties bindeth him selfe unto the other by theis presents. In witness whereof the parties above named to this Indenture interchangably have put their hand and seales the xxvth daie of September in the year of our Lord God 1607, and in ffyfte yere of the Raigne of our Soveraigne Lord King James, by the grace of God King of England Scotland ffrance and Ireland, defender of the ffaith etc.

(Signed) ROBERT HERICKE.

APPENDIX II

THE DIRGE OF ERIC BLOODAXE

IT is a far cry from the publication of *Hesperides* back through the centuries to the old Norse *Eiriks-Mal*, or *Dirge of Eric Bloodaxe*, the earliest of all Valhalla songs. But the dirge is so audacious in conception, and so heroic in spirit, that I cannot refrain from reproducing it here in the metre of Morris's *Sigurd*. The paganism of Robert Herrick was classic and not Teutonic, but he would, I think, have taken pleasure in this story of the apotheosis of his far-distant ancestor. The poem in the *Hesperides*, entitled *The Apparition of his Mistress calling him to Elysium*, is, after its kind, a treatment of the same theme which is set forth in the following poem. Eric Bloodaxe fell at the battle of Stainmoor, in Westmorland, which was fought about the year 954, and tradition informs us that the dirge was composed at the command of his wife Gunhild. It is most unfortunate that the poem is incomplete. The Old Norse text, with a translation into English prose, and fuller details as to the life of Eric Bloodaxe, will be found in the first volume of Magnusson and Powell's *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, pp. 259-261.

Odin. O say, what of dreams is this? Methought ere
the dawn I arose
Valhalla's dwellings to garnish for the warriors
slain by their foes.

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From sleep I awoke the Champions, I bade them
stir their limbs,

The benches with rushes to scatter, the beer-vats
to fill to the brims ;

Bade the Valkyrie bear the wine, as though a king
were at hand,

Or of chieftains, to gladden my heart, a fair and
goodly band.

Bragi. What uproar is this that I hear? 'Tis as if a
thousand men,

Or some great host of warriors, were moving hither
again.

The boarded walls are creaking, as if to Odin's
hall

Balder himself were returning, of the gods the
fairest of all.

Odin. Of a truth thou speakest fondly, good Bragi,
though thou art wise,

'Tis for Eric Bloodaxe it thunders, 'tis he who
comes to the skies.

Sigmund, and thou, Sinfiotli, rise in haste the king
to greet,

Bid him in, if it be Eric, give him welcome to this
seat.

Sigmund. Why lookest thou more for this Eric than
for kings of other lands?

Odin. Because over many a kingdom he has borne his
blood-stained brands.

Sigmund. Then why didst thou rob him of victory,
if thou thought'st him brave 'gainst all
odds?

Odin. Because who knows when the Grey Wolf shall
threaten the seats of the gods.

Sigmund (meeting Eric). All hail! to thee, Eric the
kingly, thou art welcome within these wards.

Appendix

But what kings are these which follow from the
clash of the keen-edged swords?

Eric. Kings are they five in number, I will tell thee all
their names,

And I myself am the sixth. . . .

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